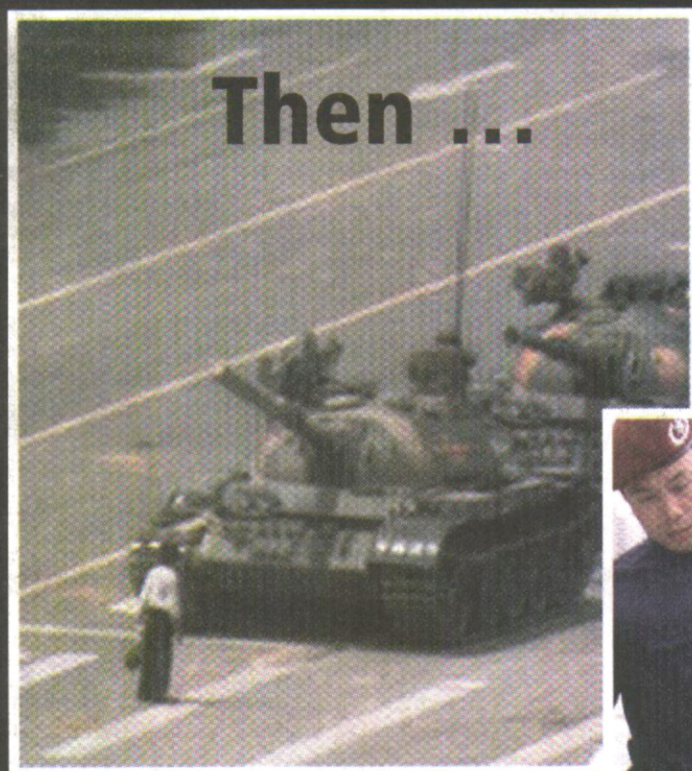


In These Times

INDEPENDENT NEWS & VIEWS

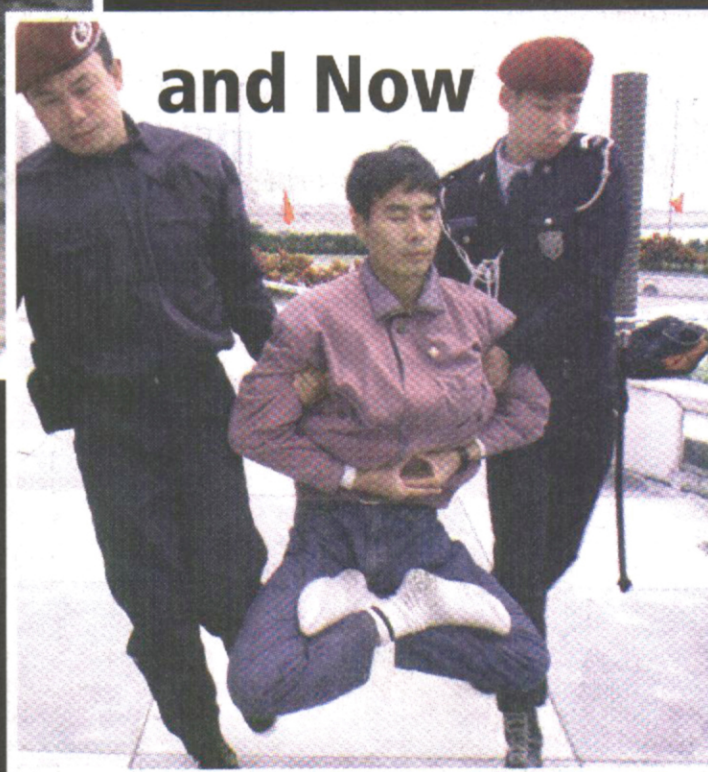
October 28, 2002

Human Rights in China



The world's attention
has shifted away,
but Beijing's record
is only getting worse

Joshua Schenker reports



Plus William S. Lin looks for
the Tiananmen generation

Ian Williams on
Hong Kong's decline



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Editorial

Action, Inaction, Reaction

The risks of inaction," argues Vice President Dick Cheney, in a typically flawed justification for war to overthrow Saddam Hussein, "are greater than the risks of action."

But war aimed at "regime change" is not the only choice. During the '90s, U.N. inspections had eliminated more than 90 percent of Iraq's arsenal and capacity to manufacture and weapons of mass destruction, before U.S. abuse of inspections to spy on Saddam precipitated the inspectors' withdrawal in 1998, according to former U.N. inspector Scott Ritter (interviewed by William Rivers Pitt in the new book *War on Iraq*). Inspections and destruction of prohibited weapons, even if an imperfect process, remain a viable option to contain any potential threat from Saddam.

Equally serious, the Bush administration still has not demonstrated the risks of *not* going to war immediately (what Cheney dishonestly labels "inaction"). The White House has offered no credible evidence that Saddam has any militarily significant capacity to produce or deliver weapons of mass destruction against countries in the region, let alone the United States. Yes, Saddam is a reprehensible tyrant, who has tried in the past, with varying degrees of success, to develop biological, chemical and nuclear weapons, to conceal those efforts from inspectors, and to use some of those weapons. But what's new? He was doing much of that, with the knowledge of U.S. officials, when he was fighting Iran and receiving aid from Washington.

There is no imminent threat. British Prime Minister Tony Blair's dossier, even if taken at face value, shows the need for renewed U.N. inspections, not war. Despite attempts to link Iraq to 9/11, there is no known tie—and much known hostility—between Saddam and al-Qaeda. The main risk of new U.N. inspections is undermining Bush's case for war by showing that Saddam really doesn't have weapons that pose a threat.

But the risks of Cheney's "action"—that is, war—are enormous. In attempting to justify a war that is both "pre-emptive" and aimed at "regime change," the United States is opening two broad new justifications for international aggression, setting a dangerous precedent, and violating international law. War risks massive civilian casualties in Iraq and heavy American military losses in antic-

ipated block-to-block urban combat in Baghdad—not to mention the complete destabilization of Iraq, divided between antagonistic camps of majority Shi'ites, northern Kurds and Sunnis linked to Saddam.

The U.S. insistence on war and eliminating Saddam, whatever the United Nations does, increases the likelihood that he will use whatever weapons he does have and direct them toward Israel, which has vowed to retaliate. Turkey and Iran almost certainly will be drawn into the fray. The risks of exacerbating the existing conflicts between Israel and the Palestinians, as well as India and Pakistan, are immense. War would only foment more anti-American terrorism.

The rising tide of distrust and antipathy toward the United States in Europe and elsewhere risks intensifying political conflict within regions far removed from Iraq, making the United States an isolated rogue state. The economic costs in oil price spikes, deepened global recession, and years of occupation and reconstruction of Iraq would be extremely high.

The new national security strategy issued by the Bush administration is ominous not only in its argument for pre-emptive attack, but in its imperial ambition for American power to enforce a "single sustainable model for national success." Europeans, not to men-

The Bush administration is opening broad new justifications for international aggression.

tion much of the rest of the world, are squeamish about America imposing that single, increasingly discredited model of unregulated, untempered capitalism on them—especially by an arrogant military power that ignores international institutions when it can't use them as a fig leaf for its own designs. War on Iraq is likely to trigger a much more widespread and diverse opposition to American imperial power, heightening tensions around the world.

In short, Cheney is dead wrong. The risks of his kind of action are much greater than the risks of a much smarter kind of action—international cooperation in monitoring and containing any potential threat from the Iraqi regime.

—David Moberg

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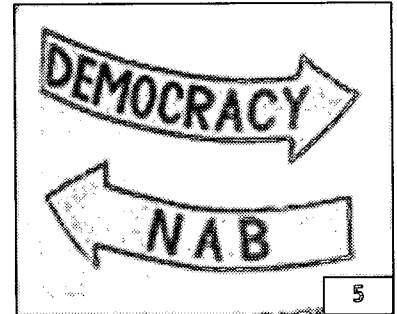
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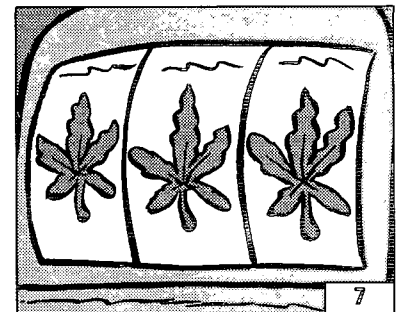
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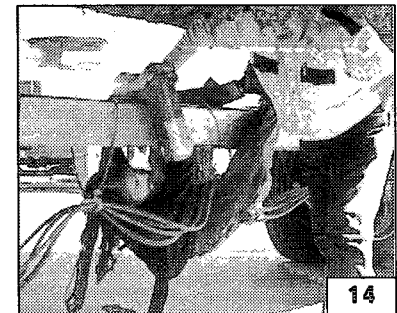
The Boondocks creates controversy on the comics page.



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Forgotten Muslims

I read "The Forgotten History of Islam in America" by Salim Muwakkil and learned a few things (September 16). I liked the longer view of history, but the article paid little attention to the 70 percent of American Muslims who are not African-American. This is unacceptable. These mainly Arab-American immigrants are important, because they, especially the Palestinians, are the link to Muslim causes; they may be a source of domestic terror, though not yet; they may be a domestic counter to international terror; and Islamic peoples will most likely be one of the major groups countering capitalistic globalization.

At the moment I am getting most of my analysis of Islamic people and Arab-Americans from the *Washington Post* and www.islamonline.org. I expect *In These Times* to step up to the plate!

Daniel Adkins
Arlington, Virginia

What a Quake

I always appreciate Juan Gonzalez's writing, and the article on the toxic consequences of 9/11 is no exception ("Fallout," September 16). However, he may be displaying some slight East Coast bias when he states that "surely, no American city has ever confronted a calamity of this scale."

Certainly the 1906 San Francisco earthquake and fire was a disaster on at least a similarly massive scale. Granted, since it occurred nearly a century ago, the toxic effects are not well documented (and no, there were no computers pulverized). But 25,000 buildings were destroyed and nearly 500 city blocks leveled; possibly as many or more people died. (The myth of relatively few deaths stems from the fact that vast numbers who died in Chinatown simply weren't counted!)

I hate to nitpick, but I also hate to add to the histrionics surrounding the September 11 tragedy, which our political leaders eagerly latch on to in order to further their warlike agenda.

Avilee Goodwin
Richmond, California

Party Pooper

What crawled up A.S. Hamrah's butt and died there? His review of *24 Hour Party People* is so mean-spirited, and so wrong, you have to wonder if he's suffering from some strange disorder ("Where's the Ecstasy?" September 16).

Far from being a "debunking" of the Manchester music scene of the '80s, the film is a joyous and loving homage to that era. Far

from portraying the lead character, Tony Wilson, "as a jerk from the get-go," director Michael Winterbottom's movie looks at him with affection and love, despite his pretensions and bad business practices.

And Hamrah's criticism of Winterbottom's postmodern filmmaking technique—especially characters addressing the audience, and real-life people popping up to comment on the action—is just plain nasty.

This isn't tedious "poverty of intention," as Hamrah puts it, but fun and unpretentious filmmaking that makes *24 Hour Party People* a joy to watch. I knew nothing about Joy Division, Manchester or Tony Wilson before I saw this film. I've seen it twice now, and think that it is one of the best representations of how rock 'n' roll changes people, how it spreads joy, ever put on screen.

Hamrah's review reads like a sour-grapes screed written by someone who was a big Joy Division fan and doesn't want his music co-opted by others. Too bad.

And too bad for *In These Times* readers, who would be a natural constituency for this wonderful movie—they deserved a better, and more insightful, review than Hamrah the Hun wrote.

Lewis Beale
Secaucus, New Jersey

Evil-o-Meter

I think that Ana Marie Cox meant well. But the phrase, "Saddam is indeed evil," followed by a paragraph more temperate in nature

regarding world affairs, aroused my anger ("Estranged Bedfellows," September 30).

What are our standards of "evil"? Since the Bush administration has used the term "Axis of Evil" for its own political purposes, I think we need to have a definition of evil, and, perhaps, even, a scale of "evil-ness." The term "evil" is too easy to use and too difficult to define.

At what point did Saddam become evil? Before we supported him? Or after? If the former, then why did we support him and supply arms versus Iran? If the latter, why did he become evil? Because of our support? If so, then we need to rethink giving the bad guys in the world our support. (We've had many bad experiences here: the Shah, Osama bin Laden, Saddam Hussein, not to mention South America.)

Let's work on a zero to 10 scale for evil. At zero, we can place Buddha. At 10, we can place Hitler. Everyone else can fall in between. So where does Saddam fall in this scale? Probably about a five. Where do the collective U.S. presidential actions rate over the past 30 years? Probably about a four. We can quibble about the ratings, but I doubt that an honest reviewer would find it necessary to change more than a unit.

Gary L. Hickernell
Ossining, New York

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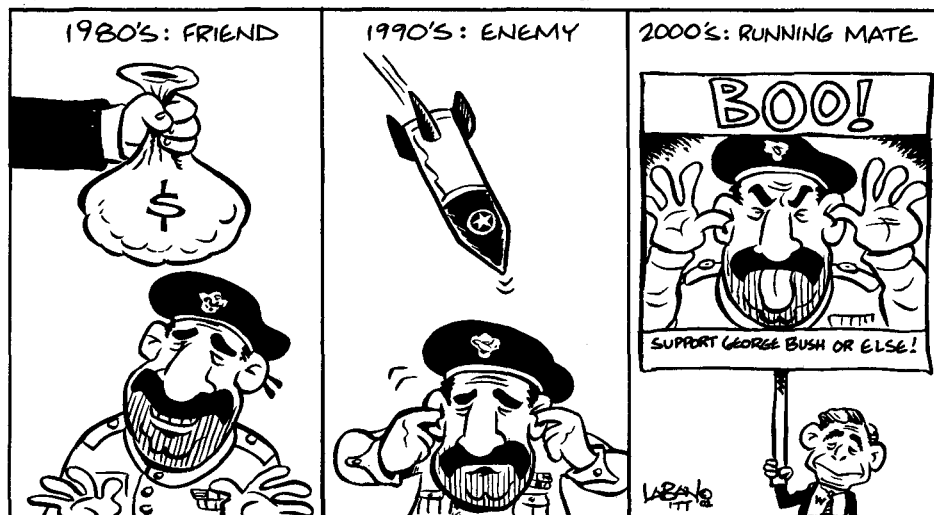
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Terry LaBan

AMERICA AND SADDAM: A BRIEF HISTORY



Crude Maneuvers

The race for Iraqi oil is on

By Armen Georgian

As military strategists in Washington and London pore over invasion plans for Iraq, the rush to control the country's lucrative northern oil fields has already begun—with Turkey leading the fray.

The oil-rich Kirkuk and Mosul regions comprise part of the no-fly zone in northern Iraq, where an autonomous Kurdish administration has operated since the end of the Gulf War. An estimated 3 million Kurds live uneasily in the area alongside tens of thousands of ethnic Turkmen and Arabs.

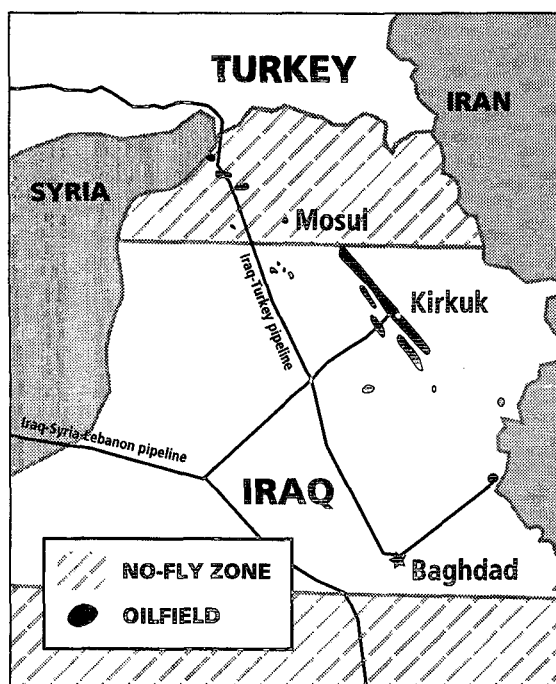
The Kurds, Turkmen, Ankara and Washington all have one common interest: Kirkuk oil. The "great game" for Kirkuk stretches back to 1918, when the oil-hungry British seized the region from the defeated Ottoman empire. Since then, Turkey has periodically raised the issue of its lost territories. Oil analysts estimate the present Iraq-Turkey pipeline could yield eight times its current output in a post-sanctions, post-Saddam Iraq. Total reserves in the Kirkuk field are worth an estimated \$10 billion. "Freeing up these reserves would benefit Turkey, which has no oil of its own," says independent political analyst Mohammed Nouredine, "and Washington, which needs its NATO ally to transport the oil safely to Western markets."

At the end of August, Turkish Defense Minister Sabahattin Cakmakoglu made a thinly veiled threat to annex Kirkuk and Mosul by referring to the areas as "historic Turkish lands" under Ankara's "direct safekeeping."

The controversial comments were followed on September 6 by calls from the deputy speaker of the Turkish Parliament, Murat Sokmenoglu, for an autonomous Turkmen region comprising Kirkuk and Mosul. He reasoned that the Turkmen's linguistic and ethnic ties to Turkey—the two groups share a common ancestry and speak similar languages—would make them an ideal buffer against wayward Kurdish leader Massoud

Barzani, who has worried Ankara by demanding an independent Kurdish state in northern Iraq. On September 9, Turkish Foreign Minister Sukru Sina Gurel ominously remarked: "Turkey will do whatever is necessary in line with its national interests and security needs," another threat to annex Kirkuk should Barzani get his way.

Small wonder, then, that Washington and Ankara reportedly clinched a deal in January 2001 if the United States decided to oust Saddam by force.



According to the Germany-based Kurdish newspaper *Ozgur Politika*, such a deal would kill two birds with one stone by blocking an incipient Kurdish state and securing U.S.-Turkish control over the Kirkuk and Mosul oil fields.

Apart from its common strategic interests with Ankara, the Bush administration has thick oil ties of its own to northern Iraq. As CEO of oil giant Halliburton, Vice President Dick Cheney oversaw the sale of more than \$73 million in spare parts and equipment to Iraq through French subsidiaries from early 1997 to the summer of 2000, U.N. records show. Much of the equipment was used to refurbish the creaking Iraq-Turkey pipeline.

Thus, it's no surprise that Cheney had long advocated an end to unilateral U.S.

sanctions on Baghdad. According to a *Washington Post* report in June 2001, Halliburton subsidiaries Dresser-Rand and Ingersoll Dresser Pump traded with Iraq for a year under Cheney—signing some \$30 million in contracts—before he sold the subsidiaries in February 2000. In July of that year, Cheney denied the deals had taken place, but changed his tune three weeks later when a Halliburton spokesman confirmed Dresser's and Ingersoll's dealings in Iraq.

Iraqi National Congress leader Ahmed Chalabi has predicted that, in the event of Saddam's ouster, U.S. oil heavyweights will have a "big shot at Iraqi oil"—companies like Halliburton, ExxonMobil and ChevronTexaco. But first Turkey will have to secure control over Kirkuk—and all the options are fraught with danger.

According to analyst Nouredine, the reclaiming of former Turkish lands would open up a Pandora's box of suppressed territorial disputes with neighboring Syria, Armenia and Greece, potentially destabilizing the whole Middle East. Moreover, Nouredine warns, Syrian Kurds live close enough to sabotage the Iraq-Turkey pipeline if Ankara got heavy-handed with their brethren in Northern Iraq.

Playing the Turkmen card is problematic too. So far, the six major Turkmen factions have cooperated uneasily, but a power struggle post-Saddam could sharpen existing rivalries and undermine the unity Ankara and Washington are banking on. Enmity toward the Iraqi Kurds also goes back a long way. In July 1959, Kurdish communists massacred most of Kirkuk City's Turkmen.

Ultimately, Iraq's Kurds and Turkmen may be unwilling to give up the relative freedom they have enjoyed under the no-fly zones to become pawns in the regional chess game masterminded by Washington and Ankara. And, if the ethnic rivalries for Kirkuk lead to bloodshed, warns Kani Xulam, director of the American Kurdish Information Network, "Turkey will have to say goodbye to Iraq."

If he's right, it would also be a rueful goodbye from Dick Cheney, and from the oil giants now salivating at their prospects once Saddam has gone. ■

Now You See, Now You Don't The Pentagon's blinding lasers

By Frida Berrigan

U.S. weapons manufacturers are hard at work developing futuristic precision weapons that promise to keep Americans even further out of harm's way: lasers.

Lockheed Martin and Raytheon, who together had \$20.3 billion in Pentagon contracts in 2001, are collaborating on development of "directed energy weapons"—powerful 100-kilowatt infrared lasers for use on the F-35 Joint Strike Fighter.

The JSF program, worth an estimated \$200 billion, is Lockheed Martin's crowning accomplishment. If all goes well, the Pentagon will soon order as many as 3,000 F-35s, making it the largest acquisition program in history. This \$40 million fighter plane will be ubiquitous in the U.S. military and throughout the world.

England, Norway, Italy, Singapore, Turkey, Israel and others have already expressed serious interest as well.

The JSF laser system could be used to destroy communication lines, power grids, or fuel dumps, or to zero in on part of a vehicle, like the engine. The weapons, which are scheduled to be ready for testing in 2010, would be covert, powerful and untraceable. "There's no huge explosion associated with its employment, there are no pieces and parts left behind that someone can analyze to say, 'this came from the United States,'" explains an unnamed Lockheed Martin official quoted in *Aviation Week and Space Technology* in July. "The damage is localized, and it is hard to tell where it came from and when it happened. It is all pretty mysterious."

So mysterious, in fact, that engineers are only beginning to consider what the lasers will do to people. According to *Aviation Week and Space Technology*, military planners in Israel are not pursuing directed-energy weapons because of concerns they "might result in new, unanticipated types of collateral damage." For example, the

weapons could disrupt electricity at civilian sites or affect pacemakers.

They could also blind and injure people in the vicinity. As Gordon Hengst of the Air Force Research Laboratory in New Mexico, where the research on the lasers is being conducted, points out: "The reflected energy typically will cover large amounts of real estate and space, since the energy is spreading in many directions."

He adds that if the target is moving, the possibility of refraction is greater. According to *New Scientist* magazine, the human eye is very vulnerable to light from lasers: "Safety guidelines warn against staring into beams of only a few milliwatts. ... The unpredictable reflections scattered from a 100-kilowatt laser could be devastating."

Weapons manufacturers concede that blinding and other injuries could occur, but say the benefits outweigh the concerns. "As with all weapons, there is potential for inflicting collateral damage," says Tom Burris, a Lockheed scientist.

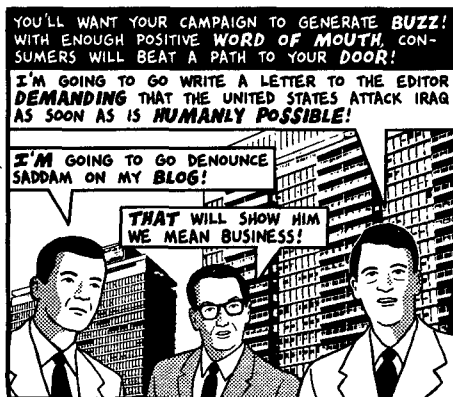
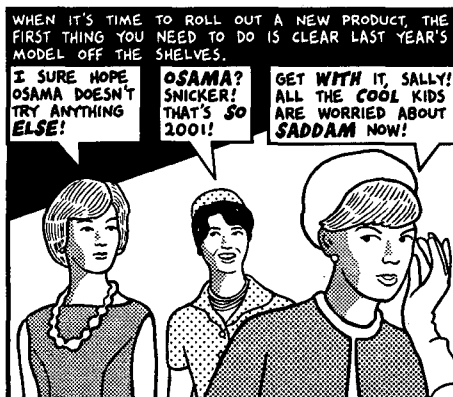
And surprisingly enough, despite the fact that the United States signed the Geneva Convention's Protocol on Blinding Laser Weapons in 1991, these weapons are exempt. The convention prohibits "laser weapons specifically designed, as their sole combat function or as one of their combat functions, to cause permanent blindness to unenhanced vision." [Emphasis added.] But a small phrase is a loophole big enough for a fighter plane to fly through. Stephen Goose of Human Rights Watch explains, "That protocol was purposely drafted to avoid capturing other types of laser weapons systems."

Laser weapons blind, whether or not they are "specifically designed" to do so as their "sole combat function." They are also the wave of the future, says Mike Booen of Raytheon: "We want to replace high explosives [like bombs and missiles] with directed energy weapons." The Pentagon has been investing accordingly.

Laser weapons seem like the answer to Washington's prayers for an antiseptic warfare that plays well on television and will not offend the American public with civilian deaths or U.S. casualties. But that's easier said than done. The Afghan war, which is costing U.S. taxpayers \$2.5 billion a month and relies on high-tech weapons and sophisticated communications equipment, has produced deadly errors with macabre regularity. With laser weapons, we can only expect more of the same. ■

THIS MODERN WORLD

by TOM TOMORROW



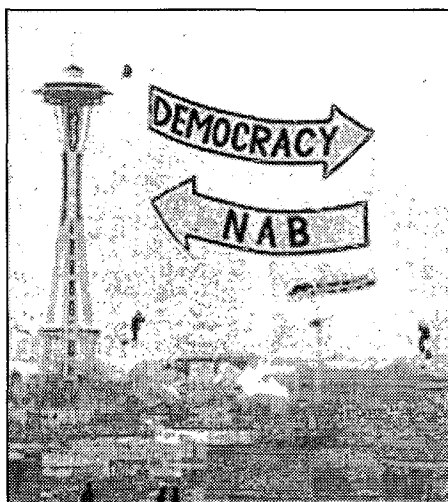
Insider Radio

At NAB convention,
consolidation was a done deal

By Geov Parrish

SEATTLE—From September 12 to 14, two groups of people who care very much about radio assembled here, separated by only about 50 yards—and 2 or 3 million light years.

The catalyst was the annual radio trade convention of the National Association of Broadcasters (NAB), held this year at the Washington State Trade and Convention Center. While some 4,500 radio industry executives huddled inside, their critics also convened in an adjacent park and church. An umbrella of alternative media agitators, networking under the name "Reclaim the Media," were protesting the mass corporatization of recent years—especially since the Telecommunications Act of 1996—that has enabled companies to amass hundreds of radio stations across the country, most of them sounding exactly alike.



Protesters hung banners at September's national radio broadcasters' convention.

The most striking feature of having the two side by side—aside from the disparity in wealth—was that both frequently proclaimed their passion for radio. But when they said it, they meant different things. Outside, the activists talked of radio's immediacy, its ability to engage the imagination and local communities, and the things that could be broadcast. Inside, they

enthused over radio's ability to tailor itself to advertisers' needs and generate profits.

Radio, in the corporate model, is tomato sauce. While the scraggly protesters debated recipes, execs worried over how best to sell the sauce; the actual taste didn't matter.

The contrast was clearest in an NAB session on the single issue protesters cared most about: a workshop titled "You're Consolidated: Pros and Cons." Remarkably, in a crowd of 30, nobody—not the NAB's moderator, panelists, nor even audience members—could find anything bad to say about corporate consolidation of their industry. Neither was there speculation on the widely anticipated further deregulation when the FCC, after several delays, delivers a "global review" of media ownership rules next spring.

Chuck Fredrick of Clear Channel Communications set the tone for the session. Clear Channel, with more than 1,200 stations—almost all of them bought since 1996—is the nation's largest chain. Fredrick works in Cincinnati, where Clear Channel owns eight stations that reach 93 percent of that city's listeners. Of his industry's con-

IN SHORT

Can I Get A Witness?

A federal judge has ruled unconstitutional the Chicago Police Department's long-standing practice of holding witnesses for long periods of time and denying them access to legal counsel.

The September 9 ruling came from a lawsuit filed by First Defense Legal Aid, a nonprofit organization that provides free legal advice to poor people held at police stations (see "Legal Eagles," September 2). Lawyers from First Defense said police barred them from consulting with their clients for periods of up to 24 hours under the pretext their clients were there voluntarily, and were "free to leave" at any time. Meanwhile, First Defense claimed, police treated their clients as suspects, keeping them isolated in locked interrogation rooms and handcuffing them to chairs.

In his 41-page opinion, Judge Milton Shadur of U.S. District Court in Chicago scathingly critiqued such practices. Ordering Chicago police to allow lawyers immediate access to clients, Shadur wrote: "Such conditions are intended to and must in fact induce fear and desperation in a witness, thereby increasing the likelihood that a witness will give a statement even if to do so is contrary to his own best interests."

While admitting they isolated witnesses and discouraged them from seeing attorneys, Chicago police argued such tactics helped witnesses establish a "personal bond" with detectives and "overcome reluctance" to cooperate. In response, Shadur wrote such claims were "a euphemistic way of describing [the police's] actual purpose ... to prevent any person from informing witnesses of their right not to cooperate in police investigations." Chicago police have been granted a stay on the

order until an appeals court makes its decision.—BC

BY BRIAN COOK AND
GEORGE H.W. BUSH

Remember When ... ?

"While we hoped that popular revolt or coup would topple Saddam, neither the United States nor the countries of the region wished to see the breakup of the Iraqi state. We were concerned about the long-term balance of power at the head of the Gulf. Trying to eliminate Saddam, extending the ground war into an occupation of Iraq, would have violated our guideline about not changing objectives in midstream, engaging in 'mission creep,' and would have incurred incalculable human and political costs. Apprehending him was probably impossible. We had been unable to find Noriega in Panama, which we knew intimately. We would have been forced to occupy Baghdad and, in effect, rule Iraq. The coalition would instantly have collapsed, the Arabs deserting it in anger and other allies pulling out as well. Under those circumstances, furthermore, we had been self-consciously trying to set a pattern for handling aggression in the post-Cold War world. Going in and occupying Iraq, thus unilaterally exceeding the U.N.'s mandate, would have destroyed the precedent of international response to aggression we hoped to establish. Had we gone the invasion route, the United States could conceivably still be an occupying power in a bitterly hostile land. It would have been a dramatically different—and perhaps barren—outcome."

—From *A World Transformed*, by President George H.W. Bush and former National Security Adviser Brent Scowcroft; excerpted in *Time*, March 2, 1998. With special thanks to www.thememoryhole.org.

solidation, he gushed: "I don't know that we've done anything wrong. Clear Channel is like a very kind gorilla."

Mike Carter—owner of three African-American-formatted stations in Kansas City, and the only non-white in the room (there were four women)—called consolidation "a fact of life for all the right reasons ... there's been a lot of money generated by [station] sales." Carter acknowledged that minority ownership has declined since 1996 (as has racial diversity among radio's employees). But he was more concerned that no more local stations were available for his company to buy than that he'd already bought out Kansas City's only other minority owner.

Pressed on the matter, Don Benson of mid-sized chain Jefferson Pilot Communications acknowledged job losses in the industry. But he crowed that consolidation has "raised the industry's profile on Wall Street," and dismissed criticism of corporate control as irrelevant: "You can't put that genie back in the bottle."

There have, in fact, been job cuts; this year's convention drew far fewer attendees than it would have 15 years ago. Notably absent were vendors selling program content—while the NAB has always had a sales focus, this year what listeners actually hear was hardly mentioned at all. They're an afterthought; what matters most is that we not be too offended by what we hear.

Nowhere is that truer than at Clear Channel. Fredrick's "very kind gorilla" gained notoriety in the wake of September 11 for a widely circulated list of songs individual stations should avoid, from the tasteless ("Dust in the Wind") to the pointedly censorious ("Imagine," "Peace Train"). In San Francisco last year, radio personality Davey D was fired from Clear Channel's KMEL after interviewing Rep. Barbara Lee about her vote against bombing Afghanistan.

Davey, along with Amy Goodman (Pacifica's *Democracy Now!*), David Barsamian (*Alternative Radio*) and others, electrified a Town Hall crowd of more than 1,000 on Friday night. It was the

high point of four days in which activists from the Internet, low-power FM and pirate radio, cable access TV and all manner of print publications milled about trading strategies and wondering what was going on inside.

The answer would have been incomprehensible to many—sales seminars, mostly, with "PPMs" and "TSLs," "Cumes" and "Multiples" (all industry terms for sales and audience-listening measures) the prime topic of discussion. But then, the vision held by the folks outside was equally foreign to most NAB attendees: that media isn't like tomato sauce, that it's essential for the diversity of music and culture and for the information citizens need in a democracy. That's a trait almost every other Western democracy recognizes with a mixture of privately and publicly funded radio and TV. Radio is different, not because of its selling power, but because it helps determine who we are as a people.

To some of the breed now controlling our radio dial, that's the same thing. ■

(((((((((((APPALL-O-METER))))))))

Sic Semper Moronis **1.2**

Bart Sibrèl of Nashville, Tennessee, believes the Apollo lunar landing was a hoax. So, according to The Associated Press, Sibrèl tracked down astronaut Buzz Aldrin at the Luxe Hotel in Beverly Hills and demanded that he swear on a Bible that he had been to the moon. Aldrin replied in accordance with flyboy custom and decked the doubter.

A Spliff With That, Sir? **3.3**

Dude, if you work at Kentucky Fried Chicken, and that KFC happens to be located in the expensive Marin County enclave of Mill Valley, you're probably scrounging to make ends meet. Why not make the best of a bad situation and sell a little bud to the hot-tub crowd from the drive-thru window? That's exactly what Carlos Leonel Ayala was doing, accord-

ing to the *Marin Independent Journal*. Ayala took special orders from preferred customers in a code that sounded like unusual food orders. His cover was blown after he delivered a bag of weed to a square who really just wanted an extra biscuit. The customer found a surprise in his bag, returned it to the restaurant counter, and demanded his biscuit. Then he called the narcs.

Suffer, Little Ones **10.0**

If you've been wondering what it takes to score a perfect 10 on the Appall-o-Meter, it's puppies. The Detroit Health Department has fired an animal control worker for feeding a litter of puppies to a python. According to the *Detroit Free Press*, the employee (who has not been named) may face felony charges as well.

Public officials and other guardians of decency have

bemoaned the puppies' cruel end, which probably involved strangulation or suffocation before the snake swallowed them. However, had they not been fed to the serpent, the puppies would have met their end in a 4-foot-by-4-foot gas chamber, just like 4,576 stray critters have already done this year. Or they could have been sold to researchers. One supposes that snakes got to eat, too. But puppies! It's too much.

So Long, Johnny Deadline **0.0**

Big-time newspaper columnist seduces Catholic schoolgirl. Years later, as woman, schoolgirl calls

columnist. Columnist freaks out and sics FBI agent friend on schoolgirl with intimations of harassment charges. Appall-o-Meter registers zero. Why? Because the columnist is *Chicago Tribune* schmaltz merchant Bob Greene, and he's finally gone. Resigned, never again to mine child abuse cases for sanctimonious platitudes or otherwise chain-yank the rubes and boobs of the American interior. We couldn't be happier.



TERRY LUJAN

Amsterdam of the West

Fear and Toking in Las Vegas

By Geoff Schumacher

LAS VEGAS—It shouldn't be surprising that Nevada is at the center of the latest battle over marijuana legalization. After all, Nevada is home to legalized gambling and prostitution and has long cultivated a live-and-let-live reputation. It would seem an ideal place for advocates to go a step further in their campaign to decriminalize pot.

And yet Nevada's actions don't always live up to its reputation. On many issues, Nevadans are extremely conservative, showing overwhelming support for a "protection of marriage" initiative and recently imposing tighter restrictions on exotic dancing.

Nevadans are just as split on the legalization of marijuana. In two recent polls, the state was evenly divided on the question of whether to legalize possession of up to three ounces of the drug. That hasn't stopped a constitutional amendment to that effect from appearing on the state's November ballot, and supporters and critics are working furiously to make their case to a highly undecided populace.

The initiative is the product of an aggressive petition drive, sponsored by Nevadans for Responsible Law Enforcement, a local group affiliated with the Marijuana Policy Project in Washington. NRLE volunteers fanned out across the state, gathering 109,000 signatures—a state record—in 40 days to qualify for the ballot. If it passes in November, the question must be approved again in 2004 to go into effect. (Constitutional amendments in Nevada must be approved twice by voters.)

The initiative seeks to alleviate an array of concerns voters might raise. Under the plan, only state-licensed establishments could sell marijuana, and only to adults. Use would be prohibited in public places, and transporting pot out of

Nevada would be illegal. Marijuana sales would also be heavily taxed, providing a new revenue source for the perennially cash-strapped state. While advocates have downplayed the parallel, critics have said the initiative could turn Nevada into the Amsterdam of the West.

"Most people say, 'I don't care what you do in your own home,'" says Billy Rogers, campaign manager for NRLE. "This initiative allows responsible adults to possess marijuana in their own homes, and it prevents irresponsible people from acting irresponsibly." Rogers says passage of the initiative would put many drug dealers out of business.



Early in the campaign, NRLE thought it had scored a major coup when the Nevada Conference of Police and Sheriffs came out in support of the initiative. NCOPS President Andy Anderson took an informal poll of his board and declared it supported the proposal, on grounds that police officers do not believe they should be wasting valuable time arresting people possessing small amounts of marijuana. The announcement caused a firestorm in the law-enforcement community: A formal vote of the board later denounced the initiative, and Anderson resigned.

The controversy has also awakened a sleeping giant: Las Vegas police officials and unions, who are organizing a

fundraising campaign to fight the initiative. Richard Winget, the No. 2 man in the Las Vegas Police Department, cites numerous reasons for police opposition, including predicted increases in traffic fatalities and auto insurance rates, as well as concerns that increased marijuana use will spur an increase in crime. Winget says convenience stores in Nevada are constantly caught selling alcohol to minors. "Do we really believe these stores will be more effective at controlling the sale of marijuana?" he asks.

Most important, Winget contends, is that Nevada has already settled this issue. In 2001, the Nevada legislature effectively decriminalized possession of up to one ounce of marijuana, turning what had once been a felony offense into a misdemeanor punishable with a citation. The state also has legalized the use of marijuana for medicinal purposes. "We don't waste our time now booking people for small amounts," Winget says.

Nevada's initiative has drawn national attention. While Arizona and Ohio are considering easing marijuana possession penalties, Nevada's initiative is by far the most dramatic U.S. effort to legalize pot. White House Drug Czar John Walters has condemned the plan, suggesting its passage would make Nevada a "vacation spot for drug traffickers." Walters has

announced plans to campaign against the initiative across Nevada. NRLE's Rogers responds that Nevadans, stung repeatedly by Washington dogooders and meddlers, are "sick and tired of the federal government stepping in and telling them what to do." Rogers has challenged Walters to a public debate on the question.

With the anti-marijuana forces aggressively joining the publicity battle, the fate of the initiative is hardly decided. The pro-pot contingent is counting on Nevada's independent-minded silent majority to make its presence known come November. "Ultimately, education is our strongest weapon," Rogers says. "If voters know what's in this initiative, we will win." ■

BY DAVID BACON

Behind the News

WASHINGTON—During the Vietnam War, many reporters considered it their responsibility to expose Pentagon propaganda and misinformation. During the civil rights movement, many journalists looked at themselves as advocates for racial justice.

Today, however, newsroom culture often discourages journalists from identifying too closely with social justice movements, whether in communities or union halls. Many feel discouraged about their ability to give a full and accurate picture of the world they see, to voice progressive ideas about social justice, and even more so, to act on them.

That's why unions like the Newspaper Guild play an important role. With about 35,000 members, the Guild offers protection for those journalists who seek to cover movements for social justice, and even to participate in them. In *These Times* spoke with the Guild's president of seven years, Linda Foley, in July.

When you were elected president of the Guild, a lot of people thought the organization was making a turn away from conservatism. Do you think one of journalism's purposes should be to cause social change?

I totally agree with that. That is the critical mission of journalism. It's great to talk to journalists, not just [about], "I wrote this great story," but, "Here's what my story did. Here are the results of my actions."

Some media critics say that journalism schools and the corporatization of news encourage a culture of self-censorship by journalists. Do you agree?

I think that's true. That wasn't occurring when I was working day-to-day at a newspaper, to the extent that it's happening now. It's not good if everybody is a business reporter. And journalism schools, although not all of them, are focused on training business reporters. ... Still, today there are young people going into journalism who feel the same way I did. The question is, how do you encourage that idealism? How do you train them to use those reporting skills in a way that adheres to those ideals and principles?

Some of the criticism is also demographic. The increase in hiring workers of color has slipped; there are also questions about the economic level from which most reporters are drawn—people with enough money to go to college, for instance.

The criticism about diversity is absolutely true. It's a domino effect. People are comfortable talking to and giving information to people like themselves. People from diverse communities have an identity and an understanding of the culture from which they come. If you want to cover a community thoroughly, you need to have as diverse a work force as you can. All kinds of economic backgrounds. All kinds of ethnic and racial backgrounds. You want to have ... reporters who are in tune with all the cultures and networks, and communities who then trust the reporting staff to tell their stories in an accurate way.

What is the Guild doing to fight increasing media consolidation?

I'm not sure that it can be bucked. Given the structure of our society, the political climate and the culture, it's very difficult. But wherever we can, despite the business pressures, we have to maintain independent voices in the media, both in the mainstream media and outside of it.

I don't believe we should just forget about the mainstream media and concentrate on alternative media to get our voices out. I think it's important to have strong independent voices within the mainstream media.

Today, the Federal Communications Commission is moving to drop many of the regulations that allow for multiple voices and multiple owners of broadcast media. We're trying to stop the repeal of the newspaper-broadcast cross-ownership rule, which prohibits ownership of newspaper and broadcast outlets in the same city by the same entity. But it's a very difficult fight.

Journalists in mainstream newspapers have to function in a climate in which their publishers aren't sympathetic to doing in-depth coverage of a strike or radical community struggles, or taking a critical view of U.S. foreign policy. Does the union have a role to play in creating a political space in which journalists can write about these things?

I don't know that it's our job to make sure that the labor movement gets covered in the newspaper. I think it's our job, if there is legitimate news to be covered in the labor movement, to make sure that reporters who write about that are free to do so, without



Newspaper Guild President Linda Foley.

fear of retaliation or censorship. That's the best we can do.

I'm not sure we [should] advocate or promote the idea that reporters should put in print what we, the Guild, think constitutes social justice. I think that would backfire on us, actually. We have to think of other ways.

What's important is that journalists themselves have a voice within the media corporations where they work. The only way that's possible is for them to organize. None of our values are going to be held anywhere in these companies if journalists don't organize and come forward and promote them with one voice. ■

Good News from Florida

By Susan J. Douglas

It is hard to feel anything but outrage and defeat these days, as the Bush administration stomps its way through various deliberative bodies, allies, powerful counter-arguments and objections to its mission to invade Iraq, no matter what.

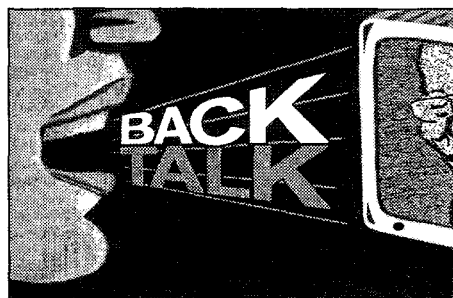
One welcome moment of levity came when Florida—need I say more—once again proved that Larry, Moe and Curly could probably run an election more successfully (and with fewer pokes in the eye) than local officials. But lost in the you've-got-to-be-joking coverage of the Florida primaries was a real victory for progressives: Voters in Miami defeated a ballot initiative that would have repealed a local ordinance barring discrimination based on sexual orientation. And this occurred despite widespread voting irregularities, including reports by some voters that when they pressed "no" on the touch screen—opposing the repeal—it read "yes."

This victory for the gay-lesbian-bisexual-transgender community has even greater resonance because of Miami's history. In 1977, as some of us remember, Anita Bryant, that smarmy and sanctimonious shill for Florida orange juice, took it upon herself to lead a campaign to strike from the books a recently enacted anti-discrimination law protecting gay rights. She won, in a major setback to the gay liberation movement, and no new law was passed in Miami-Dade until 1998.

Immediately, the Christian Coalition of Florida mounted a campaign to repeal the new law, and got the ballot initiative put before voters this September. "There's no ordinance protecting people with three nostrils," noted Matt Dupree, director of the Christian Coalition, by way of explanation.

But political and business leaders failed to find this incisive argument compelling. Eighteen Dade County mayors, Carnival Cruise Lines, BellSouth and the Democratic National Committee, which is slated to hold its 2004 convention in Miami, all opposed repeal, some even contributing money to the cause.

But let's not overlook what has changed in gay and lesbian politics since Bryant and the Christian right had their way with civil rights. The National Gay and Lesbian Task Force, which dedicates itself to fighting local anti-gay ballot initiatives, has become a highly disciplined and well-organized association. Working closely with local activists, the NGLTF sent nearly 100 staff and volunteers to



Miami-Dade to fight the repeal. It also donated nearly \$100,000 to the cause. Their energized on-the-ground field training, organizing and talking directly to voters, especially straights who are "gay friendly" and vote, was highly effective. In the wake of their Miami-Dade victory, the NGLTF has won a \$1 million grant from the Arcus Foundation to expand its field organizing work.

Last year, gay rights advocates won four out of five anti-discrimination initiatives in 2001, and they have been victorious in four other states so far this year. In November, four more states will consider anti-gay ballot initiatives: Maine, Maryland, Nevada and Oregon.

Of course, as we know from *Will & Grace* and "gay vague" advertising techniques, the media have identified gays and lesbians as an important and lucrative niche market. And when you're a market in this country, then you really matter. The massive dissing of Dr. Laura by gays and their straight allies helped deep-six her TV show.

More important, though, has been the gradual coming out, over the past 30 years, of gays and lesbians all over the country. Millions of private, sometimes

terribly lonely acts of courage (and necessity) have changed our society, so that millions of us who are straight now interact with gays and lesbians in a totally taken-for-granted fashion. For millions of straight people all over the country, this just isn't even an issue anymore.

Millions of others believe they don't know any gay people, and remain rabidly, venomously homophobic. (Let's not forget the October anniversary of Matthew Shepard's murder, only four years ago.) Increasingly, then, we seem to have two straight Americas: one accepting of or deeply tied to folks who are gay, the other consumed by prejudice.

Six out of 10 Americans, according to Gallup polls, oppose gay marriages, but 46 percent (as of May 2002) support civil unions. Seventy-two percent support gays serving in the military, up from 57 percent in 1992. Seventy-one percent believe gays should be granted protections under hate-crime laws. Nearly half (46 percent) favor adoptive rights for gay parents.

So we still have a long way to go in ensuring that gay men and women enjoy the same basic rights and dignities as

We seem to have two straight Americas: one accepting of folks who are gay, the other consumed by prejudice.

straights. But these polling data show enormous progress in public attitudes over the past two decades. Despite the persistence of harassment, and worse, it turns out most people find the Christian Coalition's three-nostril argument just as moronic as it sounds.

So let's take heart in the Miami-Dade victory and applaud the great success of the organizers who pulled it off. Now if they could just get to work on the notion of regime change in Iraq. ■

Susan Douglas is a professor of communications studies at the University of Michigan and author of *Where the Girls Are* and *Listening In*.

HOLY WAR

What's really driving Bush's crusade against Saddam Hussein?

BY IAN WILLIAMS

UNITED NATIONS

George W. Bush may not have been totally serious when he declared his support for enforcement of U.N. resolutions at the opening of the General Assembly, one day after the anniversary of 9/11. But only his advisers could have been surprised when the first test of his resolve came from Ariel Sharon's rampage through Ramallah a week later.

Even the United States called Israeli actions "unhelpful," which is the strongest criticism Washington permits nowadays. But when the Europeans put forward Security Council Resolution 1435 on September 24, calling on the Israelis to withdraw, Washington had no choice but to go along. A U.S. veto would have had serious consequences for any upcoming U.S.-backed resolutions on Iraq.

The Israeli Foreign Ministry immediately showed how Sharon can make life difficult for his American allies, issuing a statement that the resolution was positive in calling for an end to Palestinian terrorist attacks and for putting terrorists on trial, but saying that Israel had "difficulty in accepting" the U.N. demand for an immediate end to its military action.

Bush had temporarily deflated many of his international critics with his speech before the General Assembly. However, things began to fall apart at a September 14 press conference to announce the result of a meeting of the "quartet"—the United Nations, European Union, United States and Russia—supposedly to organize an international peace conference on the Israel-Palestinian issue. The other parties met stubborn American resistance to any attempt to advance the conference—even though it was Bush's idea to begin with.

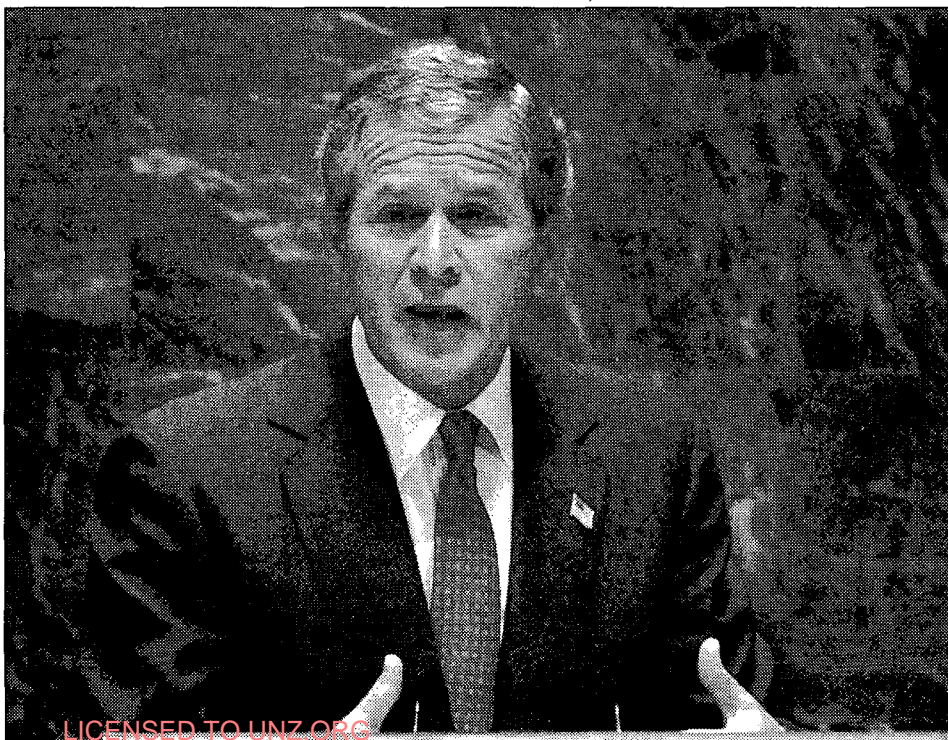
Palestinian Ambassador Nasser El Kidwa charges that America is hypocritical for threatening to invade Baghdad for violating U.N. resolutions, while ignoring "three decades of Israeli defiance." He counts 28 Security Council resolutions against Israeli behavior in the Occupied Territories—and suggests that 27 others would have passed if the United States had not vetoed them.

Many administrations have denied any "linkage" between the Israeli-Palestinian con-

flict and the standoff with Iraq. But even when the president's father went to war to chase Iraq out of Kuwait, he promised the world in general, and the Arabs in particular, that the U.S. would push hard on the Middle East peace process immediately afterward. "And he met the promise and began the process with the Madrid peace talks," says Richard Murphy, assistant secretary of state for Near Eastern affairs in the Reagan administration.

Contrasting that with what he calls the current administration's "obsession with Iraq," Murphy says the White House is missing the obvious. "They do not buy the argument that they could make it easier for themselves by paying attention to the Israel-Palestine confrontation to buy more space and maneuverability with the Arab world. They just resist it. I can't explain it."

It's not as if the strategic importance of resolving the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is a secret. Everyone from close allies like Tony Blair to U.N. head Kofi Annan to the Saudis have been telling Bush that he needs to advance the peace process—not just because it's the right thing to do, but because it will help him oust Saddam Hussein without plunging the region into chaos.



The president doesn't allow facts to get in the way of his faith about Saddam's evil nature.

While the White House talk about democracy in Iraq sounds good, the administration's friends in Israel may be much less keen. A democratically elected government in Baghdad is going to be every bit as pro-Palestinian as Hussein's regime, if not more so. And few Arab leaders are willing to risk popular anger by helping Washington send some planes to bomb Iraq for defying U.N. resolutions at the same time the United States gives other planes to Israel to strafe Palestinian towns in defiance of U.N. resolutions.

Yet the president is not taking the obvious diplomatic steps, such as reassuring the allies he needs to mount a successful military operation. This baffles even many of the president's supporters. "Being obsessed may be why he's not interested in the tactics of building support with Iran or with the Saudis," Murphy suggests. "He's done a little bit to smooth them over—but they are in a pretty fussed state."

The administration's potential allies remain unconvinced that Saddam Hussein had anything at all to do with September 11, and most of them are worried about the long-term consequences of an attack and the Bush administration's lack of forward planning. "There is no sign of planning," says Jim Hoge of the Council on Foreign Relations. "If there were, I would think they would be alerting us to it, because it would be reassuring." Hoge suggests that the Bush administration's obsession with Iraq is "diverting attention and energy particularly at the top, where it is so important, from two much more serious problems [like] the war against al-Qaeda."

Outsiders assume, when it comes to foreign policy, that there is a seesaw between the administration's rational element, led by Colin Powell, and the hawks. However, says Judith Kipper of the Brookings Institution, "There's no doubt about who's in charge. Bush is closer to the Cheney, Rumsfeld and Wolfowitz point of view." The hawks, all uncritical supporters of Israel's Likud Party, tend "to see the Arab-Israeli conflict, in fact most foreign policy, through the prism of the war on terrorism."

This view meshes neatly with the president's worldview. Richard Murphy characterizes the president as "a believer. This is a man who's on a mission. He is very evangelical about terrorism: He's got to root out evil."

And the president doesn't let facts get in the way of his faith. "I wonder if in his mind there really is a very strong linkage between Saddam Hussein and al-Qaeda," Murphy muses. "Evil is there, and evil must be uprooted, and the fixation on terrorism has now encompassed Saddam Hussein—who 'tried to kill my father,' as a footnote. He seems to think the facts are there about the linkage—if only we could discover them. In his mind they are joined up. He does not speak as a man with any doubts."

Is the president's policy based on a series of deeply felt but disconnected prejudices in which Saddam Hussein, Osama bin

Laden, Yasser Arafat and Iran metamorphose into one single evil entity, against which Ariel Sharon and the United States have joined together to do the Lord's work? "This is a very, very ideological administration," Kipper says, "more than conservative, and the president does have a sense of priorities that sees everything in black and white." ■

UNDER SIEGE

How Arafat survives political and military attacks

BY CHARMAINE SEITZ

RAMALLAH, THE WEST BANK

The Israeli army siege of Yasser Arafat's compound showed all the reasons why, after two long years, the Palestinian uprising—and the Palestinian leader—remains alive.

Since late June, Ramallah has endured on-again, off-again curfews, sporadically enforced by patrolling tanks and jeeps. Encircled, impoverished and in mourning, Palestinians are simply tired. The people of Ramallah have been worrying about their children—who had already spent half of the school year locked in their homes—not thinking about Yasser Arafat.

But when two suicide bombers killed seven Israelis over two days, breaking a six-week lull in armed Palestinian attacks, the public tensed. On September 19, 30 Israeli army tanks and armored cars surrounded Ramallah's central government compound. Bulldozers moved in and began to chip away at the structures left standing in previous invasions. The operation was dubbed, "A Matter of Time," implying the goal that sooner or later the Palestinian leader would submit.

Israel was demanding that Palestinians on its wanted list, who it said were inside the compound, turn themselves in. But the real goal, according to Israeli writer Amos Harel, was to make the Palestinian leader miserable. "Arafat will be stuck in a stinking, dirty hole," a senior military official told him. Taking that one step further, Palestinian officials suspect Ariel Sharon's goal was to rid himself of Arafat altogether by provoking either his voluntary departure to the Gaza Strip, or his handover of the wanted men, both of which would have been political suicide for the beleaguered leader.

Arafat's political standing was already on shaky ground. In recent weeks, his Fatah faction had been torn by disputes over

how the group could best lead the Palestinian mainstream out of international isolation. Those divisions, between the old guard and a new leadership clamoring to be heard, rose to the surface in uncharacteristic public disputes: first, over a Fatah plan to stop attacks on Israeli civilians, then over the president's appointed cabinet. The cabinet, when faced with the prospect of being voted out by a Fatah-controlled legislature, resigned en masse—but not before Arafat was forced to commit to new elections on January 20.

Those pressuring Arafat to let new leadership take over, commence real dialogue between the many Palestinian factions and reassess the strategies of the *intifada* were still a minority. But they were an influential minority. One Fatah member and former minister had been so audacious as to write a confessional letter in the government-controlled newspaper. "Mister president," it read. "We committed serious mistakes against our people, our authority and our dream of statehood. To make up for these mistakes, we must confess to our failure first, and then take immediate action."

But the attack on the Ramallah compound arrested that internal debate. "We will not accept anyone to replace Arafat," Fatah announced in a leaflet. "Palestine is not Afghanistan, and Israel and the United States will find here no Karzai."

The Israeli government was not interested in the slow process of a declining Arafat; it wanted him to bow his head. And so the demolition crews slowly released their payload around the government offices. "They were the kind of explosions where you would have to open your eyes and make sure you are standing to see whether the bomb was in the room with you, or just next door," said one official who was in the building.

By late Saturday, September 21, the only structure left whole was the building where Arafat, his advisers and some 200 others were holed up. The digging machines were now pecking away at its corners. "I felt really there was a danger in the evening," recalls finance minister Salam Fayyad, speaking by phone from the compound. "That is not to say that we are out of danger now, but it was very serious."

Just around midnight, the Israeli army began announcing through bullhorns that demolition was imminent and those inside must come out. It seemed an impossible situation. Palestinian officials were furiously making contacts with diplomats all over the world. The main Arabic satellite channel, al-Jazeera, carried live coverage of the minutes ticking by and the pleas from inside the compound.

GREEN LANTERN

Fischer leads Schröder to victory in Germany

BY DOUG IRELAND

The eyelash victory of German Chancellor Gerhard Schröder's left coalition government in the September 22 parliamentary elections was motored in more ways than one by the Green Party's leader, Foreign Minister and Vice Chancellor Joschka Fischer, the most popular politician in opinion polls.

Both Schröder's Social Democrats (SPD) and the affiliated conservative parties (the Christian Democratic Union and its Bavarian arm, the Christian Social Union) polled 38.5 percent of the vote; indeed, the SPD-Green coalition's victory margin was just 8,000 votes. In an election that was decided in a thimble—and with the SPD's score falling 2.4 percent from the last elections—the Greens' increase of their vote from 6.7 percent to 8.6 percent provided the winning difference, and made them the third-largest party in the country.

Fischer is the man who tamed the Greens' fundamentalist pacifism and engineered the sending of German troops to the Balkans and Afghanistan. But armed with polls showing the U.S.-planned war on Iraq overwhelmingly unpopular, he got credit for persuading the ever poll-sensitive Schröder to make German refusal to participate in any military operation against Iraq a central theme

of the campaign—an issue that dominated the campaign's final weeks to Schröder's advantage. And when devastating floods ravaged Germany in August, it was the Greens—with a record of warnings about flood dangers—whose control of the Environment Ministry gave the government credibility in its response.

Schröder, a consummate political showman, gussied himself up in rubber knee-boots and rainslicker and dominated the TV news for days with hasty trips to the hardest-hit areas—while his conservative opponent, the austere Edmund Stoiber, lollygagged on vacation. (When Stoiber—who notably had no environmental adviser in his kitchen cabinet—belatedly showed up in water-logged Dresden, he provoked derision by wearing loafers). The floods, combined with a rapid government bailout to preserve the 5,000 jobs at stake in the telecommunications firm MobilCom (threatened with bankruptcy when its partner—state-run France Telecom—withdrew its support in August), allowed Schröder to pose as Germany's premier *Krisenmanager* (crisis manager).

In their first four years in government, the Greens were able to deliver on a raft of popular issues that Schröder and Fischer

When Israeli bulldozers razed the Ramallah compound, Palestinians took to the streets.

But in Ramallah, the streets were coming alive. Down in the valley, mosque loudspeakers beckoned, "Come out. Come out of your houses." Church bells rang. One crowd of young men beating a pot moved up through the city center, calling on residents to break the Israeli curfew. There were demonstrations that night in every Palestinian town and even some villages. Groups of Palestinian prisoners in Israeli jails clashed with guards in protest. While the demonstrations in the Gaza Strip numbered in the tens of thousands, and crackled with Palestinian gunshots fired in the air, those in West Bank cities were loud with car horns, not bullets. Four Palestinians were killed by Israeli gunfire that night (a week into the invasion, the death toll stood at 39).

The next day, the Ramallah compound still stood. Even if that wasn't because of the protests, those inside were grateful for the surprising defiance. "It was not to be expected," admitted Fayyad, who watched the protests on television as he sat next to Arafat. "These people have been going through a lot, and to see them going out and breaking the curfew—that was a very humbling thing."

Arafat remains inside the compound, although the bulldozers



MARCO DI LAURO/GETTY

have backed away. Observers and officials are expecting a long stand-off. But in some strange way, this encirclement of their non-too-popular leader has revived Palestinians. They are now returning the favor. "I think that Arafat's popularity is going to rise," says analyst Ali Jarbawi. "When faced by the Israelis and Americans, Arafat becomes an issue of national pride. When that ultimatum came out, the people had had enough." ■

advantageously took to the country, including the legalization of gay marriage; a major boost for organic farming; and an agreement to phase out nuclear power—combined with a new tax on fossil fuels, a reduction of polluting carbon dioxide emissions, and a massive investment in wind power.

But the Schröder-Fischer victory was, as Franco-German Green leader Daniel Cohn-Bendit has pointed out, as much a "cultural" victory as a political one. Stoiber, whose spindly-legged photos in *lederhosen* were maliciously used by the governing parties, could never shake off his origins as a pure product of Bavaria—known for its reactionary, nationalist politics, its ultramontane Catholicism, and its censorious cultural conservatism—and as a protégé of Nazi-coddling former CSU leader Franz-Josef Strauss.

One of the most effective Green TV spots in their unconventional, humor-filled campaign was a wordless portrayal of Fischer, listening disconsolately to an off-screen traditional Bavarian brass band, becoming increasingly discomfited, and finally—with a very pained grimace—putting his hands over his ears to shut out the "oom-pah-pahs." With posters featuring his photo and the simple slogan "Vote for Joschka" everywhere, Fischer's dynamic, country-wide campaign was a literal marathon: He jogged his way through the major TV media markets. And his constant presence on the stump was crucial in bringing out disillusioned left voters.

The *bon vivant* Schröder's campaign slogan, "A Modern Chancellor for a Modern Germany," drove home the portrayal of Stoiber as too old-fashioned for the 21st century. And in the first-ever TV debates between the candidates for chancellor, Schröder's carefully dyed hair and facility with the crisp sound-bite came across better than the older Stoiber's snow-white mane and long, fustian sentences that often left viewers perplexed. The show-biz and rock stars who entertained at the Schröder-Fischer rallies also gave their campaign a younger feel.

At the same time, the CDU made critical strategic errors. As Stoiber's year-long lead in the polls began to evaporate in the final weeks, his handlers tried to re-energize the traditional conservative electorate. Stoiber, who had toned down his acid nationalism, returned to race-baiting and anti-immigrant sloganeering. But his move backfired when it was denounced by the principal business federation and major Catholic and Protestant religious leaders. Then disgraced former Chancellor Helmut Kohl was enlisted for a campaign tour of major West German cities—but this only reminded voters of the massive corruption scandals that had ruined the CDU's reputation and driven Kohl from public life.

More desperate end-of-campaign flailing: After having been all over the lot on the Iraq issue, Stoiber's last-minute attacks on Schröder for destroying the German-American relationship didn't play with voters, including some nationalists who prefer that Berlin not slavishly follow Washington's lead. His pro-war posturing undoubtedly hurt in the former East Germany, which Stoiber had once hoped to carry on the unemployment issue. The CDU got just 28 percent to the SPD's 40 percent in the East, where the Party of Democratic Socialism (the ex-Communists) also lost 33 parliamentary seats, largely to Schröder's benefit, after PDS leader Gregor Gysi was ousted from office in a corruption scandal. Finally, the flirtation with anti-Semitism by the right-wing Free Democrats (FDP), CDU's projected coalition partner, helped hold the FDP's gains to just 1.2 percent for a total of 7.4 percent—far short of the 18 percent the party had loudly proclaimed as its goal.

With 55 seats in the 603-seat Bundestag, the Greens now have increased leverage to keep the opportunistic Schröder on an anti-war track; to try to bury once and for all the impotent policies of the centrist "third way" (shelved by Schröder during the campaign), which failed to stop still-rising unemployment while weakening the social safety net; and to reinforce their image as a party that deserves to be in government. But, given the razor-thin margin of their win and the profound economic problems facing the country, the Schröder-Fischer team will have a tough four years ahead of them. ■



The Battle of La Sierra

Locals hope the good ol' days of the '60s—the 1860s, that is—are coming back to San Luis, Colorado

By Adam Saytanides

SAN LUIS, COLORADO

Viewed from above, the 80-mile-wide, sagebrush-pocked San Luis Valley is a vast, inhospitable desert, a dry sea of tawny brown. The area receives only slightly more rainfall than the Mojave Desert. But the rural hamlets of San Luis are safely moored in an idyllic cove, cradled in a niche at the base of the Sangre de Cristo Mountains, and sheltered from the wind by gently sloping, thousand-foot mesas to the west.

The people of San Luis—Colorado's oldest town—are especially passionate about their land because it has provided sustenance in the harshest of environments. Farmer Joe Gallegos' family has worked this land for five generations, and he would not consider selling off even an acre of the family ranch. His great-grandfather was one of the first Mexican settlers to arrive in this valley back in the mid-1800s.

San Luis, originally part of Mexico, was settled under guidelines laid out in the 1844 Sangre de Cristo land grant, which predated the Mexican-American War. The farmers and ranchers who moved here were promised access to the nearby mountainsides, which serve as a watershed and form a majestic forested amphitheater above the town. The Gallegos family, along with hundreds of other pioneers, used the mountain tract

for the next 100 years. Locals simply call the place La Sierra—"the mountain."

They depended on La Sierra's resources for their very survival. It was the settlement's communal hunting and fishing grounds, a source of timber, firewood and crucial summer pasture. "My grandpa probably had 500 head of sheep up there," Gallegos says. "You have to understand, they were sustaining six to eight families—that's how they used to work it back then—my grandpa and all my grand-uncles, together."

For the past 40 years, the villagers of San Luis have been cut off from La Sierra. But they've never stopped fighting to regain their traditional rights to the land. In June, the Colorado Supreme Court finally ruled in their favor, a landmark decision that could turn back the clock and reinstate the communal use of the mountainside.

The conflict started in 1960, when Jack T. Taylor—a millionaire lumberman from North Carolina and a descendant of President Zachary Taylor—came to town, determined to buy the densely forested timberlands for himself. Although Taylor's deed to the 77,500 acres recognized the "so-called settler's

rights" to pasture, wood and water, he was determined to keep the local people out. Later that year, Taylor's lawyers—225 miles away in Denver—found a way to erase this language from his deed via an obscure federal court proceeding. Then Taylor tried to fence the land and enacted a brutal no-trespassing policy. The once-proud pioneers of San Luis had to sneak onto La Sierra. If they were caught, they risked a serious beating; sometimes they were chased off with gunfire.

The local community tried challenging Taylor in court. They argued that their rights to La Sierra were guaranteed by the 1848 Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo—which ended the Mexican-American War and ceded the northern half of Mexico to the United States. The treaty states: "All grants of land made by the Mexican government ... in territories previously appertaining to Mexico ... shall be respected to the same extent that the same grants would be valid if the said territories had remained within the limits of Mexico."

But the first round of judges to rule on the case rejected their argument. "I don't want to hear anything about old Mexican law," scoffed Judge O. Hatfield Chilson in 1963.

Cut off from the mountains, the population and economy of San Luis withered. "It was like an exodus," Joe Gallegos says. "There was no opportunity anymore in the agriculture business. People left seeking work in the cities and a better life."

By the '70s, a seething sense of resentment and racial injustice had taken hold of young Mexican-Americans in the Southwest. Groups like the Alianza—led by firebrand Reies Lopez Tijerina—sprang up, accusing the U.S. government of failing to protect community land grants and causing the impoverishment of native Hispanics throughout the Southwest. The Alianza sought to regain those lands by any means necessary, and forcefully reoccupied several land grants in New Mexico. A range war was raging in San Luis over La Sierra. In 1975, Taylor was shot in the leg by an unidentified sniper. He left town, and his cabin burned to the ground shortly afterward.

Around this time, Ray Otero, an associate of Tijerina, began organizing in San Luis. Otero says he came with the intention of orchestrating a militant direct-action campaign. But the community elders convinced him otherwise. "After discussing all the options, the elders decided they wanted to try the court system," Otero recalls. "They were convinced that their rights were well-documented."

So the people of San Luis again turned to the courts for relief. This time, they were much better organized, with a team of pro bono lawyers from Denver to back them up. After years of meticulous research, a new lawsuit—*Rael v. Taylor*—was filed in 1981. The lawyers focused on crucial documents tracing ownership of the land.

ABOVE: Farmer Joe Gallegos irrigates his alfalfa fields in San Luis.

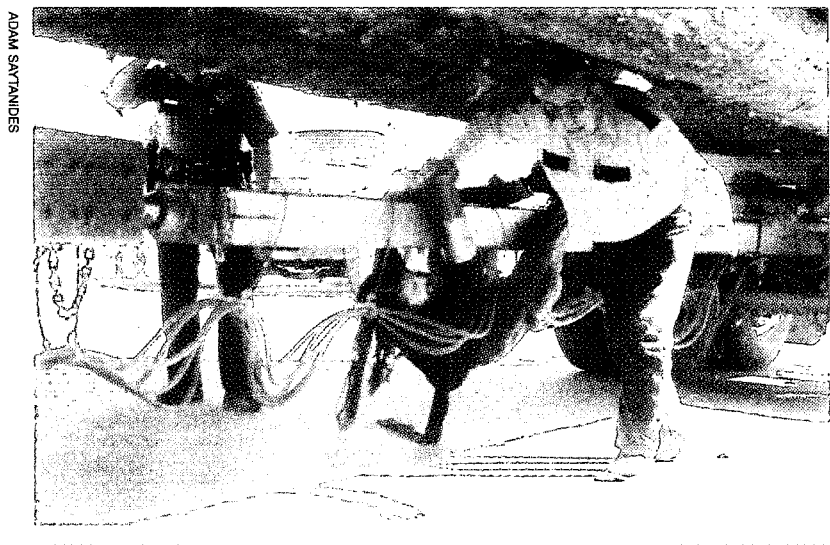
RIGHT: An Earth First! protester chains himself to the bottom of a truck to protest logging at Taylor Ranch.

Especially important was a recognition of local settlers' rights signed in 1864 by William Gilpin, Colorado's first territorial governor, who had bought the land from the original administrators of the Sangre de Cristo grant. Despite such compelling documentary evidence, Taylor's lawyers triumphed again and again. As the '80s progressed, lead plaintiff Apolinar Rael died. Taylor died, too, leaving the ranch in control of his son, Zachary. The plaintiffs continued to appeal the case—renamed *Lobato v. Taylor*—into the '90s, and they continued to lose ground.

Finally, in 1994, the Colorado Supreme Court ordered the district court in San Luis to reopen the case. The justices ruled that Taylor's 1960 legal maneuver was rife with due-process violations—that the local residents who had an interest in the property were not given adequate notice that their rights were being challenged. But once more, in a 1997 trial, the petitioners from San Luis lost. And again, their appeal was denied. "A lot of people were starting to give up hope," recalls Gallegos, whose father is a plaintiff in the case. "We were starting to lose faith in the courts."

Meanwhile, the wily Zachary Taylor had hedged his bets on the lawsuit by selling off the timber rights to the entire 77,500-acre parcel, an estimated 32 million board feet. In 1996, a multitude of corporations began aggressive commercial logging operations on the ranch. Farmers like Gallegos complained that the watershed was being destroyed and that irregular runoff and sediment would ruin the generations-old irrigation system that fed off the mountain streams.

The logging immediately attracted the attention of groups like Earth First!, Greenpeace, Colorado's Ancient Forest Rescue and Santa Fe-based Forest Guardians, who called it the biggest private timber sale in the country. Environmentalists descended on San Luis to begin what would become a two-year direct-action campaign. "The hippies," as the locals called them, frequently blockaded the ranch, locking themselves to gates and logging trucks. Soon, Hispanic land grant activists from across the Southwest were making pilgrimages to San Luis Valley, asking how they could help.



The unusual alliance of activists and local ranchers that emerged also held rallies in Denver, occupying Gov. Roy Romer's office several times. Under increased political pressure, the state stepped up a plan to purchase the ranch from Taylor and turn La Sierra into a state park. But Taylor was a tough negotiator, and the local community was divided on the plan. Otero vocalized the feelings of many locals at the time: "If you steal something from me, I'm not gonna buy it back."

The new century brought yet another change in the ownership of La Sierra. Lou L. Pai, an embattled former Enron executive, now holds the title to the vast mountain tract. He bought the ranch from Taylor through three limited-liability partnerships between 1997 and 2000. A Denver judge then halted the logging, at Pai's request. But the new owner also used his deep pockets to fence off and patrol the ranch far more effectively than Taylor ever had, and Pai too refused to recognize any local claims to La Sierra.

Pai's connections to Enron have further complicated the issue. The SEC has determined that the \$23 million Pai used to buy the ranch came from the \$353 million in now worthless Enron stock that he liquidated before his retirement in July 2001 and the company's descent into bankruptcy. A lawsuit filed by Enron investors and employees specifically mentions Pai's ranch as an asset that can be traced to alleged insider-trading, raising concerns that a third party may try to stake a claim to La Sierra. Ray Otero's wife, Shirley Romero-Otero, a San Luis native and plaintiff in the lawsuit, recently told *Pacifica's Democracy Now!*: "Whoever buys the mountain buys the lawsuit. Our rights go before anybody else's rights."

In its landmark June 24 ruling, the Colorado Supreme Court unequivocally condemned the Taylors' effort to fence out the local people: "It would be an understatement to say that this was an injustice," declared Chief Justice Mary Mullarkey, writing for the majority. Citing "traditional settlement practices, repeated references to settlement rights in documents associated with the Sangre de Cristo grant including Taylor's deed, the one hundred year history of the landowners' use of the Taylor ranch, and other evidence," the high court ordered that the local practices of grazing livestock and cutting timber and firewood on La Sierra be restored.

It wasn't a total victory: The decision stopped short of reinstating the rights of fishing, hunting and recreation that grant heirs also claimed. But David Martinez, one of the attorneys representing the heirs, says the decision, once implemented, will give local residents "who own farm plots in the valley an easement to pass upon and extract resources from La Sierra."

**"Whoever
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Our rights go
before anybody
else's rights."**

"It's an incredible decision," says Gallegos, who can hardly believe it himself. "We've established a precedent—it's not a dead issue anymore." Indeed, the ruling electrified land grant activists throughout the Southwest, who are now plotting new ways to press claims to other long-lost land grants, especially in New Mexico.

Former New Mexico Lt. Gov. Roberto Mondragon leads the Land Grant Forum, a coalition of land grant heirs who continue to press their claims to lost lands. He says the Taylor Ranch decision may lead to much bigger things, especially when the Government Accounting Office releases the findings of a study on community land grants later this year. "How many people that were living near their communal grants had to leave because they couldn't carry on their way of life?" Mondragon asks. "When the dust from this decision settles, somehow we will need to address the issue of restitution. Maybe Congress can compensate people for those losses, perhaps by setting up a trust fund for buying additional land."

It may take some time for the dust to settle. Even with the momentous legal victory, locals technically are still not allowed on La Sierra. Complex and time-consuming negotiations will now begin to decide who gets to use the land. Only 10 heirs were listed as plaintiffs in the case, a result of an earlier state court decision denying a class-action lawsuit. That issue will now have to be

hashed out all over again before the Colorado Supreme Court, which has reserved the right to rule on how many landowners will eventually be allowed back on La Sierra.

"Those broad sweeping statements about injustice only mean something if they get something," observes Ray Micklewright, a lawyer who once defended Taylor and now represents Pai's interests. He asks: "Who gets the bundle of sticks that constitutes this easement? Who assumes the cost of managing grazing? Who takes responsibility to ensure that firewood is taken responsibly? Will there be some special master?"

Micklewright denies that an appeal to the U.S. Supreme Court is in the works. But one Colorado lawyer and former land grant activist who is close to the case (and asked to remain anonymous) thinks that Pai's lawyers will appeal anyway. "Given all the money they've already spent," he says. "I'd be surprised if they didn't try at least one last salvo."

Legal wrangling aside, Joe Gallegos says that, for the first time in decades, he feels optimistic about the future of La Sierra and San Luis. When he looks up at the chiseled, snowcapped peaks, 6,000 feet above his alfalfa fields, he sees more than just a mountain. "I see freedom," he says. "Freedom and beauty, and all the things you can't put money on. I mean, it's communal property. Isn't that something Americans can understand?" ■

Adam Saytanides is a freelance journalist and resident of the San Luis Valley. His stories about Taylor Ranch have been heard on Pacifica, NPR and Radio Bilingue.

Truth Is Stranger...

By Adam Saytanides

The *Milagro Beanfield War* tells the story of a poor man in northern New Mexico who attempts to illegally irrigate his family's traditional plot of land and ends up touching off a small-scale revolution. Robert Redford made the tale into a movie. But when iconoclastic author John Nichols published the novel in 1974, the scenario was hardly the stuff of Hollywood fantasy. At the time, a similar sort of range war was underway at Taylor Ranch in San Luis, just 18 miles from the New Mexico state line.

Land-grant activists—who have long insisted that the 1848 Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo guarantees settlers' rights—are thrilled by the Colorado Supreme Court's June decision, which allows the heirs to the Mexican land grant in San Luis back on

involvement in issues like the Taos Pueblo trying to get back their lands.

Why do you think these struggles are so persistent in the Southwest?

When I worked with people in the Taos Valley in the '70s, I was just amazed at the ability, particularly of the elderly, Spanish-speaking people, to just persist against all odds you can imagine. They didn't have the money, they didn't have political power, they didn't have the ownership of the economic apparatus, they didn't have any power with the courts. I followed these people for a decade in Taos; they just didn't give up—in a battle that pitted them against the Bureau of Reclamation, the state engineer's office, every banker, every business and corporation in the area that wanted a big lake, a big dam, in order to accelerate development. It was quite a lesson. Call it the stoic, stolid persistence of a community to sustain its land and its culture, its language, its customs.

Why is it so important that land-grant communities like San Luis get to keep their commonlands?

Anything that works to sustain indigenous, local community and culture is an important gesture against the globalizing destruction of the planet. So opening the Taylor Ranch to communal use is something that reinforces structures that we need to look at if we're going to come up with an alternative lifestyle to the one that is currently lambasting the planet.

So you consider the land-grant tradition and that communal lifestyle as a blueprint of sorts?

Absolutely. I think most land should belong to the public. We need to invent a new economic system. Capitalism doesn't work. ... We need to completely redesign human value systems. And one of those values ought to be the creation of a global commons in

order to manage the ecosystem in some sort of sustainable manner for all the peoples on earth. Otherwise, we're just fucking doomed.

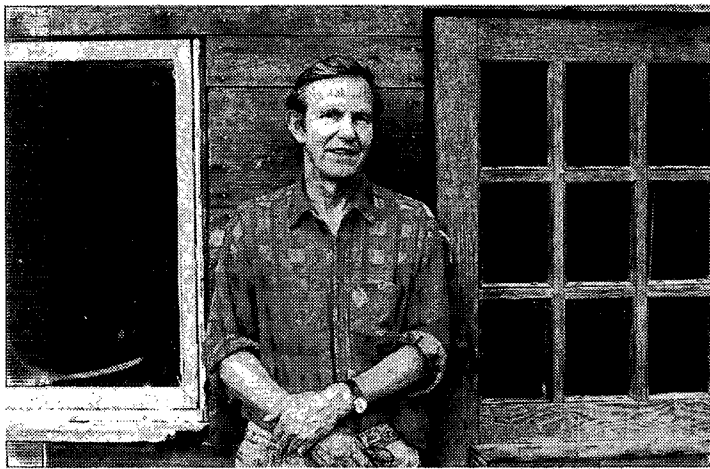
I mean, look what's happening: Almost 2.7 billion people on this planet, out of 6.1 billion, live on less than \$2 a day. You have a situation like San Luis, where a single human being, Lou Pai, controls that enormous acreage and one of the taller mountains in Colorado. He controls so many resources in a single area, and a majority of the people control almost nothing.

One of the reasons the planet is so fucked is the unequal distribution of wealth and resources, which leads to very few rich controlling the destinies of very many poor. And it's just going to lead to Armageddon.

What does Paula Poundstone say, "Don't get me started?"

Yeah, something like that.

Just don't get me started.



John Nichols, author of *The Milagro Beanfield War*.

their historic commonlands. So is Nichols, who says the struggle in San Luis is nothing short of "miraculous" (*milagro* is Spanish for "miracle").

The 60-year-old author recently spoke with *In These Times* from his home in New Mexico.

To what degree was *The Milagro Beanfield War* intended to be a statement regarding the issue of land grants and lost lands in the Southwest?

The Milagro Beanfield War is all sort of predicated on land and water struggles between cultures in northern New Mexico and southern Colorado. Every little town and every community have their own particular battles. It just tapped into all those issues.

The Milagro Beanfield War specifically grew out of my own experience in Taos, my involvement in a battle to stop a dam from being built in the Taos area in the early and mid-'70s and



KEVIN LEE / GETTY, IAN ROGERS, BARRY CRONIN / GETTY

Shanghai Surprise

*Behind a shiny facade,
China's abuse of human
rights is getting worse*

*By Joshua Schenker
Shanghai*

On a street in the middle of Shanghai, I wandered into a towering '20s edifice to admire its interior. Inside was a scene that would shock those who had been here just five years ago. The ground floor of the building had been converted into a stock brokerage, and hundreds of ordinary Chinese were furiously wagering on the local bourse.

But this scene, similar to everyday life in financial capitals like New York or Tokyo, is hardly reflective of the freedoms enjoyed by individuals in China. In recent years, multinational businesses have flocked to China's urban areas, the country has entered the World Trade Organization, and Beijing has hired foreign PR specialists to repackage the country's image in advance of the 2008 Olympics. But alongside economic liberalization, human rights have actually deteriorated. Religious revivals, labor protests and Internet chat rooms—indeed, anything the government perceives as a threat to authority—all have triggered a wave of often brutal crackdowns.

On the surface, China does seem to be a rapidly changing place, especially to foreigners who spend their time in prospering eastern cities like Shanghai. Home to less than one-fifth of China's population, these cities contain the vast majority of the country's Starbucks, mobile-phone kiosks and stock exchanges. They do seem full of young


Chinese pushing against social boundaries. "There is definitely a public image of eastern China that could be very appealing, especially to foreign businesspeople who don't dig deeper," says Mike Jendryczek of Human Rights Watch in Washington.

Thirteen years after the Tiananmen Square uprising, the world's attention has shifted away from abuses in China. Many former dissidents have returned, unwilling to speak of their past; one of 1989's leading protesters, Ya-Qin Zhang, now heads up Microsoft's research center in China. Over the past decade, China's secret police have broken up the networks of dissenters who provided information to the West, and today the best source of intelligence on human rights in China is one man, Frank Lu Siqing, who runs a monitoring organization out of his tiny Hong Kong apartment.

The current group of Chinese leaders, human rights experts say, is less tolerant than the previous generation headed by Deng Xiaoping and, for a time, Zhao Ziyang, a reformer placed under house arrest after the 1989 Tiananmen massacres. (Zhao remains incarcerated for fear he might emerge as a rallying point for reformers.)

According to He Qinglian, a prominent Chinese journalist, this current generation of leaders, led by President Jiang Zemin, cut their political teeth in 1989, when they were surprised by how quickly protests coalesced into a nationwide anti-government movement. As a result, Jiang and his cohorts have developed an almost irrational fear of groups that aspire to create a national membership. Not surprisingly, Jiang has allowed the People's Liberation Army, China's ultimate weapon against protests, to exert more influence over domestic affairs. Jiang also has increased the size of the paramilitary People's Armed Police.

In fact, some experts doubt whether the next generation of Communist Party leaders will come to the fore. As Jiang prepares to visit the United States in October, speculation is running high in Beijing that the 76-year-old president is not yet willing to give up his titles as leader of the party and the army. Jiang allegedly has been positioning his supporters in the party to elect him for another term as army chief, even as probable successor Hu Jintao is being touted as Jiang's heir.

he government's all-out war on Falun Gong, a spiritual sect dedicated to meditation and breathing exercises, has been well publicized. But rarely mentioned is the fact that Beijing's security services have routinely tortured and murdered Falun Gong adherents. The Chinese authorities reportedly have locked hundreds of Falun Gong supporters in psychiatric hospitals and force-fed them drugs; imprisoned thousands more in the world's largest system of labor camps; and quietly executed several Falun Gong practitioners.

Details of Chinese executions are shocking: According to Wang Guoqi, a pathologist who formerly worked for a Chinese army hospital, doctors frequently harvest the organs of executed prisoners, none of whom consented to organ donation. He tells of a doctor removing a kidney from a still-breathing prisoner

who had survived the initial gunshots. After the organ was removed, the condemned man was left to die.

China has taken the battle against the Falun Gong outside its borders. Beijing convinced Cambodia to deport two Falun Gong practitioners who had fled to Phnom Penh and has used its consulates in America to harass Falun Gong adherents. One Falun Gong follower in Washington claims that Chinese agents have recorded his private conversations and then left the recordings on his answering machine to intimidate him. Beijing also may have influenced the stance of Hong Kong's government and media toward Falun Gong. In April, the *South China Morning Post*, Hong Kong's leading English-language newspaper, abruptly dismissed its Beijing bureau chief, Jasper Becker, who had written several probing stories about Falun Gong. Then in August, a Hong Kong court found followers of Falun Gong, which is not outlawed in the territory, guilty of "causing a public obstruction" by protesting outside the Chinese government's main office there.

Beijing also has shrewdly capitalized on post-9/11 fears of Islamic terrorism to launch a "strike hard" campaign against Muslim "split-tists"—groups of ethnic Uighurs living in the western Xinjiang province, the site of diffuse but violent separatist movements in the past. Yet according to Dru Gladney, an expert on Chinese Muslims at the University of Hawaii, most Uighurs have become less enamored with separation as they have watched chaos envelop their independent, post-Soviet Central Asian neighbors.

Even Uighurs advocating increased autonomy primarily desire more freedom to study and utilize the Uighur language and to halt the flooding of the province with ethnic Han Chinese. (There were roughly 300,000 Han in Xinjiang in 1949; today there are more than 6.4 million.)

Still, the "strike hard" campaign has been exceptionally broad, perhaps reflecting Beijing's fear that some Uighur activists might link up with Tibetans and other disgruntled ethnic minorities. Vocally linking its crackdown to the international war on terror (Beijing claims al-Qaeda terrorists are hiding in Xinjiang), the Chinese authorities have deployed 40,000 new troops to the province, burned Uighur-language books and held "political education" sessions for 8,000 imams. These campaigns are eerily reminiscent of the Cultural Revolution's brutal "education" brainwashing sessions. Meanwhile, the security forces have detained thousands of Uighurs and executed several alleged separatists. As Craig Smith of the *New York Times* noted after watching one man be sentenced to death, Xinjiang is "the only place in the country where people are regularly put to death for political offenses."

Despite the vicious campaigns against Falun Gong and Uighur Muslims, Beijing probably most fears rural Christian evangelical groups, since evangelical uprisings helped topple several pre-Communist governments. "The number of Christians in China is growing strongly, and the government knows this and is worried," says Joseph Kung, president of the Cardinal Kung Foundation, a nonprofit based in Connecticut that promotes the Catholic Church in China.

*One of the "subversive" crimes
pinned on evangelicals is
"praying for world peace."*



China has launched a campaign against Muslim Uighurs that is eerily reminiscent of the Cultural Revolution's brutal brainwashing sessions.

Over the past three years, public security officials have targeted prominent sects such as Eastern Lightning and the Church of God, as well as underground Catholics loyal to the Vatican. (Officially atheist Beijing sponsors a state Catholic Church that does not recognize the pope.) Beijing increasingly has pitted mainstream Christians against charismatic evangelical groups, allowing some Protestant groups to worship quietly if they cooperate with security forces in rooting out other sects. What's more, a series of the government's own documents issued between 1999 and 2001 (and smuggled out of the country) reveal systematic efforts to arrest and kill members of evangelical churches. (In the documents, one of the subversive "crimes" pinned on evangelicals is "praying for world peace.") Indeed, adherents of underground sects have told human rights groups of security forces beating them with bars and electrically shocking their genitals.

Another main target of government repression has been the nascent peasants' rights and labor organizations. According to He Qinglian, at least 150 million peasants have lost their jobs over the past decade. Upon joining the WTO last winter, Beijing pledged to slash subsidies for state enterprises, reforms that probably will put at least 50 million more people out of work. Already, state workers are rarely paid, since many state-owned companies have no revenues and have been stripped of assets by their directors. In cities throughout northeast China's "rust belt," home of many formerly state-subsidized companies, thousands of unemployed workers wander the streets, sleeping on benches, selling their

bodies for sex, and begging for scraps of food. China labor experts estimate that the rust belt unemployment rate tops 20 percent, and many laid-off workers will never find another job, since their skills are ill-suited for an open economy.

Chinese farmers, who still comprise more than 50 percent of the population, also are in a precarious position. Most Chinese farms are less than two acres in size and will be unable to compete with the foreign agribusiness giants now entering China. The per capita income of rural residents is less than \$300, compared to per capita incomes of over \$4,000 in Shanghai. At the same time, farmers actually pay higher taxes than urban Chinese, since they cough up both the national fees and local "special taxes" collected by rural officials. Making matters worse, developers frequently confiscate farmers' land to build homes for China's sprawling cities, often paying no compensation for the property, since most peasants do not technically own their land. Even China's state news agency recently conceded that 12 million rural peasants will lose their land to urbanization over the next decade, a figure probably too low by half.

Many farmers and laborers have begun to express anger at their bleak situation. The number of peasant and labor protests is rising sharply, and is likely to increase as China meets its WTO requirements. In 1998 alone, Chinese labor activist Han Dongfang recorded more than 200,000 protests involving some 3 million people. During the course of these protests, 78 police and government workers were killed. In 2000, the most recent year for which statistics are available, labor disputes rose by 12 percent, as workers in several rust belt cities besieged their factories and won some unemployment benefits, encouraging other laid-off workers to protest.

In some cases, local governments and state enterprises have tolerated limited protests or have bought off farmers and laborers with minimal unemployment benefits. But if the protests continue over the course of several days, or threaten to spread to other areas, officials show no mercy. State security agents arrested whistleblowers in the rust belt province of Liaoning, who exposed corruption at state enterprises, as well as Chinese journalists who reported on peasant protests. Protest leaders have been arrested and brutally tortured, their cases widely publicized as a message to other workers.

Foreign companies have been complicit in China's human rights crackdown. Though the international media have celebrated the Internet as a potential liberalizing force, Beijing recently rolled back Internet freedoms. Many Internet cafes have been shuttered, chat rooms are closely watched by a force of 40,000 Internet security agents, and Beijing is constructing a system to monitor all Internet users. China also has used Internet firewalls to block hundreds of foreign Web sites such as the BBC and Falun Gong; the *New York Times* won a reprieve only when its editor appealed personally to Jiang Zemin. Chinese who helped others get around the firewalls have been jailed.

In July, Yahoo! signed a voluntary self-censorship pledge written by Beijing; portals that sign the pledge promise not to post any information the Chinese government considers a threat to "state security" or "social stability." According to Human Rights Watch, a recent internal memo at America Online recommended that staff abide by potential Chinese government demands for information on political dissidents. Meanwhile, Rupert Murdoch's son James, a top executive at the global media conglomerate News Corp., has publicly echoed Beijing's condemnation of the Falun Gong, calling the group an "apocalyptic cult."

Beijing has allowed local and foreign reporters some freedom to report on problems in the country's business sector. Beijing tolerates more vibrant business publications, because the government realizes an open financial press helps convince investors that China is becoming more transparent. Still, aggressive reporting, even in the business and financial sectors, can be punished if it implicates high-ranking officials. Over the past year, many Chinese companies have used the country's compliant judiciary, which convicts roughly 99 percent of defendants, to file—and win—defamation suits against business reporters.

China today is a paradox. No longer the Maoist totalitarian state, it has yet to become the liberal society so many foreign observers predicted. It has opened its economy rapidly, and urban Chinese have adopted many of the practices of industrialized economies with remarkable speed. Young urbanites today can dress as they like, watch a range of foreign television programs, even fly to a remote province to enjoy their own "Chinese Woodstock" rock festivals. But those who praise Beijing for reshaping its economy and allowing some of its citizens to improve their standards of living have ignored one unseemly fact: China is becoming more repressive, more suffocating of civil society—and potentially more combustible.

Even some state-sponsored Chinese academics have begun to predict that if inequality between urban dwellers, laid-off laborers and peasants continues to rise, and if the government does little to accommodate civil society and tolerate dissent, the People's Republic could face a social explosion or another national protest movement similar to the one in 1989. "There are hundreds of little brush fires burning," warns David Zweig, an expert on rural China at Hong Kong University of Science and Technology. "Will they become a blaze?" ■

One Country, Two Systems, Five Years

By Ian Williams

HONG KONG—On the eve of the fifth anniversary of the handover of Hong Kong, the streets of the city were filled with crowds gathered excitedly in public places to watch large-screen TVs. However, there were no Chinese flags at all, except those on official buildings. The World Cup generated what excitement there was, and most of the cosmopolitan crowds supported Brazil, noisily and enthusiastically.

The next day, large crowds surrounded the placards announcing the anniversary celebrations. But they were Filipina maids, who flock to city center parks every Sunday, their traditional day off, to picnic and talk to their friends. None of them showed the slightest interest—in any language—about the anniversary. More interested were a group of people around the corner sitting on the ground in straight rows. These were Falun Gong supporters protesting China's treatment of their colleagues and calling upon Beijing to allow them freedom to organize.

Those showing the most interest in the anniversary were the police, who scrutinized every street corner and building for a lurking assassin; Chinese President Jiang Zemin was in town for the event. Ironically though, opinion polls show that Jiang is much more popular in Hong Kong than his appointed chief executive, Tung Chee-hwa. "Before his recent 'election' to a second term," explains Martin Lee, leader of the Democracy Party, the largest in Hong Kong,

"Tung went to Beijing and got the endorsement of the Chinese leaders. After that, who would dare stand against him?"

More to the point, how could anyone oppose him? He was nominated by 714 of the 800 electoral college members—only 24 of whom are directly elected.

Before leaving, the British had started a genuine, albeit belated, conversion to democracy, which was opposed bitterly by China. Beijing preferred to rule through a cozy oligarchy of tycoons, not least because they all had businesses on the mainland. The compromise was "one country, two systems," which on paper gave Hong Kong autonomy over everything except defense and foreign affairs: its own flag, currency and courts. It also promised a transition to democracy. Instead, Lee says, "All you have is a puppet of Beijing and assistant puppets, all beholden to Beijing. That's why the next five years will be much worse."

Lee's views are shared by a majority of Hong Kongers polled this year, who want a directly elected Legislative Council and chief executive and genuinely accountable ministers. Instead, Chinese Vice Premier Qian Qichen announced the week before the July 1 anniversary that the slow movement to democracy envisaged in the agreement hammered out between Beijing and

the British had reached its limits. Any increase in democracy would put Hong Kong out of step with the mainland.

When Deng Xiaoping came up with the idea of "one country, two systems," he wasn't just being conciliatory—he wanted Hong Kong to bring modern technology and capitalism to China. But while the electronics may still be financed and marketed in the city-state, they are made and packed across the boundary in China by people working for a couple of dollars a day. Hong Kong followed the new economy model in more ways than one. It abandoned manufacturing—or rather manufacturing abandoned it.

The area bordering the colony, Shenzhen, was established as a controlled experiment, sealed off from the rest of China, so it could be stopped up like a test tube if it went wrong or overheated. Shenzhen is now a major economic power in its own right: a huge continuous belt city that rises abruptly along the border. Its growth may be making Hong Kong's autonomy dispensable for Beijing.

Back when I was a teen-age Maoist, I once spoke to Chinese Premier Chou En Lai, who said they were in no rush to take back Hong Kong until living standards on the mainland caught up with it. His heirs want to reduce Hong Kong's political development to match the mainland. Hong Kong's autonomy was once supposed to encourage Taiwan toward unification. There is little to tempt them with now. ■

The Long and Winding March

By William S. Lin

Famished, freezing and on the run from the authorities, Zhang Boli, a student leader during the Tiananmen protests in 1989, found him-

Escape from China: The Long Journey from Tiananmen to Freedom

By Zhang Boli

Translated by Kwee Kian Low

Washington Square Press

271 pages, \$26

Bad Elements: Chinese Rebels from Los Angeles to Beijing

By Ian Buruma

Random House

367 pages, \$27.95

self stranded in a brutal Siberian blizzard on Christmas Day:

I was in a state of semiconsciousness, but a moment of great clarity had arrived. A blinding ray of light shone through the darkness, and I felt warm all at once. I could not open my eyes, but I heard a voice saying, "Zhang Boli, you are not going to die. For you will go forth in my name."

I crouched on the ground, saying, "Lord, if you let me live through today, I will be forever at your service."

At that moment I became a believer in Jesus.

Zhang Boli recounts his conversion to Christianity in *Escape from China*, a stirring memoir that traces his evolution from a firm believer in Mao during his adolescence to a prominent student leader at Tiananmen Square to his dramatic getaway after the government issued a warrant for his arrest. Zhang helped lead the students who occupied Tiananmen Square and initiated a hunger strike to demand far-reaching political reform in the spring of 1989. The movement culminated in the government's decision to remove the students from the square by force; on the night of June 3 and the early morning of June 4, troops opened fire, resulting in a still unknown death count—estimates range from several hundred to a few thousand.

Zhang's narrative includes discussions of politics, and offers insight into peasant life in China as he describes his travels throughout the countryside. But Zhang's memoir can also be read as an account of his spiritual salvation. Indeed, as fellow student leader Wang Dan writes in the foreword to Zhang's book, members of the so-called Tiananmen Generation "endured an enormous spiritual impact." Was there actually a spiritual dimension to the political dissent that occurred in 1989 and in the years that followed? And what role does religion play in dissident politics?

Journalist Ian Buruma confronts these central questions, among others, in his lively study of contemporary Chinese dissidents, *Bad Elements*. While the publication last year of *The Tiananmen Papers* revealed the government leaders' decision-making during the Tiananmen movement, *Bad Elements* sets out to view events from the other side. One of the most astute Western observers of Asia, Buruma travels throughout the world to track down various Chinese dissidents in an attempt to better understand their lives and the "nature of their dissent."

The result stands as an immensely valuable work. Buruma cuts through swaths of modern Chinese history and contemporary political and social developments, distilling the most salient information to frame the questions he wishes to pose. Throughout, he interjects

his views—such as his assertion that the termination of Communist Party rule in China is not a question of "if" but of "when" and "how"—which must be read as speculative. Even Buruma admits his "conclusions have to be tentative." Yet the strength of *Bad Elements* derives from Buruma's encounters with these rebels,



Tiananmen Square, June 1989. Has the world already forgotten?

painting a clearer portrait of the individuals who have generated dissent against the Chinese government in the past, and who still do so today.

Buruma's profiles of several of the Tiananmen student leaders may be the most intriguing. (They are so engaging, in fact, that one wonders why he did not include a profile of Wang Dan, one of the most level-headed Tiananmen student leaders, who spent seven years in prison and now studies history at Harvard.) Chai Ling, the chief commander at Tiananmen Square, and one of her deputies, Li Lu, both made their way to the United States after fleeing China and transformed themselves into polished representatives of the American dream. By the time Buruma caught up with them, Chai had collected graduate degrees in public policy and business (from Princeton and Harvard, respectively), and Li had gathered a J.D. and M.B.A. from Columbia. Chai launched an Internet company in Cambridge, Massachusetts, after working at a prestigious strategy consulting firm; Li started a hedge fund in New York.

In assuming their newfound entrepreneurial identities, Chai and Li had subscribed to an American form of self-reinvention. They both seemed ready to turn the page, so to speak, especially Chai, who expressed a profound lack of interest in discussing the events of 1989—in her words, “all that old stuff, all that garbage.” In fact, Chai had always wanted to partake in the American dream, claiming that she was preparing her application for school in the States when the protests began.

But at 23, Chai gained international media attention by becoming one of the most visible figures of the student movement. On May 13, after the government failed to respond to the students' calls for a public dialogue, she delivered an emotional speech in which she urged hun-



From top: former protest leaders Chai Ling, Li Lu, Wu'er Kaixi and Wang Dan

dreds to start a hunger strike. “We, the children, are ready to die,” she cried. “We, the children, are ready to use our lives to pursue the truth. We, the children, are willing to sacrifice ourselves.”

Later, Chai would become a target for controversy when a 1995 documentary, *The Gate of Heavenly Peace*, captured her comment to an American journalist during the uprising that “what we are actually hoping for is bloodshed, the moment when the government is ready to brazenly butcher people.” In retrospect, Chai argues (in a bit of strange logic that only accompanies such charged events) that the hunger strike, rather than being in the sole service of political tactics, was a genuine affirmation of life: The students treasured life to the

extent that they would sacrifice it for others. “It was meant to overcome politics—the stereotype of politics,” she explains.

Li, a student from Nanjing University, traveled to Beijing in 1989 and soon helped lead the protests. He turned out to be one of the most radical leaders, refusing to depart the square mere days before the government crackdown, even though other student leaders such as Wang Dan and Wu'er Kaixi exhorted the crowds to evacuate. Li now views Tiananmen as an awakening in which people suddenly realized that “they had lived like slaves.” Nonetheless, he seems almost dismissive of the student leadership: “We thought we could save China because we were educated.” Li contends that the ills of China can be blamed on its “spiritual vacuum,” a theme that recurs frequently in Buruma's conversations with his subjects.

After years of rock 'n' roll excess while in exile in the United States, Wu'er Kaixi—in Buruma's estimation, “the most charming, most eloquent, most swaggering of the student leaders”—has settled down, working as a disc jockey and married to a wealthy businessman's daughter in a city in

the middle of Taiwan. He snatched the spotlight when, in May 1989, recuperating from a hunger strike and clothed in pajamas, he arrogantly confronted the government hardliner Li Peng in the Great Hall of the People during a meeting between student leaders and government officials. As a member of the Uighur minority in the western part of China, Wu'er grew up in a Muslim household which, according to him, taught him individualism. Buruma presents him now as a cynic and cultural conservative still struggling with the lost idealism of Tiananmen and bemoaning the lack of spirituality in the West. “It is hard to kill idealism,” Wu'er observes, “but Uncle Sam helped by rewarding extreme pragmatism. The green card is the best way to kill idealism.”

Zhang Boli also found freedom via Uncle Sam, but seems to have transferred his Tiananmen idealism to his personal religious beliefs. Zhang opens *Escape from China* with his recollection of the students' retreat from Tiananmen Square to Beijing University on June 4. The “naive but brave” students experienced a “profound sense of humiliation” as they inhaled wafts of tear gas and witnessed tanks plowing through tents they had set up on the Square. Zhang had plunged himself into the student movement, editing an experimental student newspaper in an effort to establish freedom of the press and serving as one of Chai Ling's deputies during the hunger strikes.

Zhang offers fleeting glimpses into the discussions among the student leaders—for example, his strategic disagreements with Wu'er Kaixi, or his opposition to the student leadership's decision to remain in the square after the imposition of martial law. These moments are so fascinating that one wishes Zhang could provide more. Upon reflection one year after the movement, Zhang felt deep guilt; he wished that the protesters had left the square earlier, which would have saved the lives of students who could spearhead the effort to enact “gradual social change.”

“Unfortunately,” Zhang writes, “what preoccupied our minds at the time was the pureness of our good intentions and our determination not to be intimidated by a ruthless regime, even at the expense of lives and blood.” Zhang realized that “living is the principle that transcends everything else.”

The abrupt end of the Tiananmen protests commenced Zhang's long and winding march to freedom. Leaving his wife and infant daughter behind, Zhang would travel as far north as the Soviet Union and as far south as Guangzhou, a city near Hong Kong. For hiding places, he relied upon his vast network of friends and family, some of whom had helpful connections to the local police. Eventually, he crossed the border into the Soviet Union hoping that the Russians would covertly send him to the United States or France. Instead, he withstood KGB interrogations and was unceremoniously dumped back into China.

Escape from China chronicles Zhang's harsh life as a fugitive in vivid detail: the many sleepless nights; the vomiting from typhoid; the skin disease from lice, fleas and other insects; the soiling of his hands with diesel oil and cutting his hair to disguise himself as a peasant; the bloody blisters developed from working in the fields to establish his cover as a migrant worker; and the encounters with his own image in the orders for his arrest on television, on printed notices in general stores or in photographs held by police at checkpoints. And a fugitive's narrative would not be complete without ample descriptions of close calls. In one instance, a disguised Zhang sat in a train next to a plainclothes policeman who wondered aloud: "It's been six months, the 21 [student leaders] have either been arrested or escaped overseas. But no one knows where Zhang Boli is. Isn't that strange?"

But in addition to photographs of his wife and daughter, which he carried at all times, Zhang depended on his newfound belief in Christ to survive his long ordeal. It is not hard to see how Zhang was drawn to Christianity, which he first encountered when he came across a handwritten copy of the Gospel according to John in a village near the Soviet border. In reading about the crucifixion, Zhang stumbled across what must have been a familiar and resonant theme: someone ostracized from society and facing execution. *Escape from China* ends with a baptismal moment as Zhang prayed while tucked into a high-speed boat heading for Hong Kong: "I put myself in the hands of God, like a small boat in the wilderness of water."

Nevertheless, other prominent dissidents also suffered without turning

to religion. As Buruma reports, Wei Jingsheng, imprisoned for 15 years after tacking a signed pro-democracy manifesto to a wall in Beijing in 1978, has no use for spirituality in his life. Neither does astrophysicist Fang Lizhi, who promoted democracy and free speech in China during the '80s and was sacked by

"It is hard to kill idealism," says one exiled dissident, "but Uncle Sam helped by rewarding extreme pragmatism."

the Communist Party; he describes himself as "anti-religion."

At any rate, in the eyes of the government the most significant threat to Communist rule in China is not Jesus Christ, but Li Hongzhi, the leader of Falun Gong. Synthesizing Buddhism, Taoism and folk traditions, Falun Gong blends spirituality with breathing exercises. Aided by the Internet, the group claims more members (a staggering 100 million) than the Chinese Communist Party, and has demonstrated its impressive organizational skills with frequent public protests (in the form of meditation sessions) in Tiananmen Square, despite the government's ban and brutal crackdowns. Buruma interprets this flourishing religious activity as a sign of revenge against the "oppressive dogmas of a morally and politically bankrupt state ... a case of village China hitting back."

Historically, religion has always played a large role in Chinese dissident movements. The emperors ruled with a divine mandate based on virtue, which scholar-officials would define according to Confucian ethics. Rebellions—though unsuccessful—often held a religious component outside the Confucian orthodoxy: the faith-healing Yellow Turbans led by a Taoist priest in the second century, the folk-Buddhist White Lotus secret society in the 14th century, and the Taiping uprising in the 19th century, led by Hong Xiuquan, who believed he was the brother of Jesus Christ.

In Buruma's judgment, however, when political rebellion is tied to religious faith, "it can easily end up replacing one form of oppression with another." Instead, Buruma is interested in building democratic institutions that tolerate intellectual, religious and political pluralism: "For unlike in the ancient Chinese system of government, or in its Communist incarnation, the center of power in a democracy cannot be the center of truth. To try and replace one center of truth with another is not the way to freedom. This is the cycle that has to end."

This cycle, in the meantime, continues to turn. In preparation for the 16th Communist Party Congress in November, the Chinese government has been organizing its own leadership succession in secrecy. Whether members of the Tiananmen generation have the interest or wherewithal to disrupt this cycle—with or without spirituality—remains to be seen. ■

William S. Lin is a researcher at The New York Times Magazine.

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A Different Kind of Patriotism

By Joshua Klein

There have been two distinct phases of Steve Earle's career. The first was a stint spent saving country music, rocking the Nashville establishment even while he descended into serious drug addic-

Jerusalem
Steve Earle
E-Squared/Artemis

tion. The second, following a sobering stay in prison, was a lot more ambitious.

Earle, no longer content with tilting at country music's impervious windmills, set his sights on the world around him, infusing his music with heaping doses of mythic Americana and activism. In 2000, Earle taught a course at Chicago's venerable Old Town School of Folk Music, beginning with Woody Guthrie and Hank Williams, continuing through Bob Dylan and then landing on Bruce Springsteen, noting how each one successively informed the next. Earle concluded, of course, with his own work, a conflation of all of those formative influences. He's a protest singer and an anthem writer, all wrapped up in one.

Earle's political views lean toward the humanist, including such causes as the land mine abolition movement and the fight to nullify the death penalty. Through his words, action and music, Earle seems to be working hard to clean out some of the darker corners of our culture, especially the barbaric remnants of past wars and failed policies that lead only to more death and intolerance. Earle's issues typically aren't contemporary so much as they're perpetually timely. His moral stance stresses the sanctity of the freedoms laid out in the Constitution, while at the same time acknowledging

that changing mores sometimes necessitate varying, malleable viewpoints.

That's the gist of "Amerika v. 6.0," the second song from Earle's deeply cynical new album *Jerusalem*, the most contemporary and specific release of Earle's career, and certainly the most contemporary and specific of the surprisingly scant responses to 9/11 yet released. The song acknowledges some of America's past and present wrongs via the perspective of someone regretful but unwilling to ensure that our country doesn't do wrong again: "Everybody's gotta die sometime, and we can't save everyone, that's the best that we can do," he mutters with mock compassion that barely clouds lazy defeatism.

While other *Jerusalem* songs address the state of the prison system ("The Truth") or even that time-honored weapon of mass destruction, heartbreak ("The Kind"), for much of the disc Earle rails against the complacency of America's citizens and criticizes those who exploit patriotism to stifle debate. But that's not to say

the sea of arguments that eventually evolve into a coherent movement or even add up to cogent public policy. America is

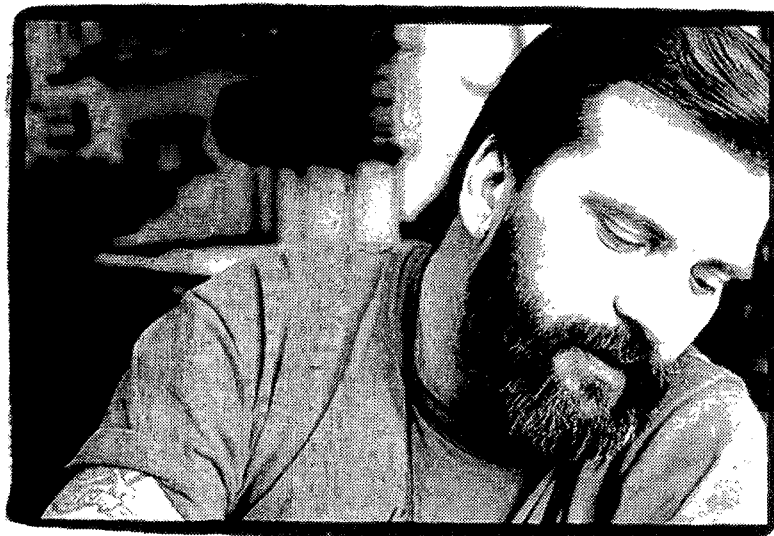
Through his music, Steve Earle seems to be working hard to clean out the darker, more barbaric corners of American culture.

a melting pot, yes, but that doesn't mean the ingredients have completely gelled, and Earle is irked by critics and politicians who don't understand that the variety of opinion floating around this country is just the thing that sets us apart from the repressive and restrictive enemies we face. (Try publicly dissenting from the Saudi line and see what happens.)

Earle's didactic critics don't—or can't—see things this way. They can't see how someone could be proudly patriotic yet still appear objective and even-handed when approaching an ambiguous subject like John Walker Lindh, the privileged Marin County youth and former hip-hop fan who headed to Afghanistan and took up arms against the United States in the name of *jihad*.

Lindh is, of course, the focus of *Jerusalem*'s most controversial and most bandied about track, "John Walker's Blues," controversial not just because of its content, but also because Earle, in a moment of ill-thought self-importance,

half-boasted on stage that the song might get him deported. Earle shouldn't turn in his passport and start packing his bags just yet. In the song, sung from Lindh's point of view, Earle doesn't criticize the United States so much as he acknowledges the confusion of the modern age we all find



John Ashcroft is unlikely to perform a duet with this man.

Earle necessarily believes one can't trust the government or should fear patriotism. Rather, Earle acknowledges the value if not the validity of different points of view.

Earle's not picking sides, either, let alone picking a fight: Others have already done that. His is just another argument in

ourselves suddenly, perhaps belatedly, living in. This is a time when cultures collide on such a regular basis that a young person like Lindh, faced with so many conflicts and mixed messages, might not know where he belongs. In the song Lindh rejects his upbringing, converts to Islam and heads off to wage war, but his head is still filled with remnants of American culture. "If I should die, I'll rise up to the sky, just like Jesus," sings Earle as Lindh, stressing Lindh's religious conflict as much as his conviction.

Several defenders of Earle have compared his first-person tale to Johnny Cash's "Folsom Prison Blues," where Cash's protagonist shoots a man in Reno "just to watch him die." Earle's version of Lindh is nowhere that sure of himself or what he wants. He's just a confused kid,

and through his fictional version of the young defector, Earle notes some of the confusion many of us still feel. Is it possible to be for our country and against war? Or against our country and for war?

Jerusalem's title track addresses the propulsion of the Middle East conflict to the top of the world's "to do" list. "Jerusalem" is a song literally about breaking boundaries, envisioning a future Middle East that has no need for walls. "I believe there'll come a day when the lion and the lamb will lie down in peace together in Jerusalem," Earle sings with a neutrality almost unheard of these days. "And there'll be no barricades then ... and we can wash all this blood from our hands, and all this hatred from our souls."

If "John Walker's Blues" gives the listener a glimpse inside the mind of one of

this war's most curious others, "Jerusalem" takes a collective view of this ongoing conflict we find ourselves thrust in. The song hints at what any conflict can become if we don't find ways to share ideas and beliefs in addition to resources and land. Earle sees a light at the end of the tunnel in his narrative, but the track's sense of optimism is tacked onto an implied warning that things can always get worse.

Yet Earle, through his often intentionally confrontational songs, seems to understand first and foremost that staid silence is not an option. Speak up for something, speak out against something, but most important of all, he tacitly implores, speak: Silence is the enemy of us all. As Earle sings in "The Truth," "For every wall you build around your fear, a thousand darker things are born in here." ■

Oceans o' Lovin'

By Joshua Rothkopf

Shohei Imamura, Japanese director of the vigorous new sex comedy *Warm Water under a Red Bridge*, has irreverence coursing in his blood even as he enters his fifth decade of moviemaking.

Warm Water under a Red Bridge
Directed by Shohei Imamura

There's a fabulous anecdote from his days as a young (and by all accounts unhappy) apprentice to the august maestro Yasujiro Ozu. The project was *Tokyo Story*, that most exquisite treatise on family loss; Imamura, whose own mother had just died of a similar brain aneurysm, became overwhelmed and fled the dubbing studio for a toilet stall. Ozu followed him in. Sidling next him to urinate, Ozu turned crisply and asked if he had gotten it right.

He had, of course, and so would Imamura during his career, but never in the same refined manner.

We still don't know what to make of Imamura's naughty generation—which also included the agitator Nagisa Oshima as well as stylish provocateurs like Seijun Suzuki—and their radical break from the standing orthodoxy of serene tatami-level observations. They swapped Kurosawa's dignified violence, so palatable to the Western tastes on which it was partly modeled, for festival notoriety and relative obscurity. But today's young directors would almost certainly be better served by grappling with the New Wave's humid,

problematized responses rather than another ticket to *Seven Samurai*.

Warm Water under a Red Bridge is Imamura's 20th feature, his second after a brief "retirement" that fortunately lasted only a year before the release of 1998's *Dr. Akagi*. Both films have the relaxed signature of a man stretching out after a day's work; both are set in picturesque fishing villages home to briny codgers and salty youths alike. But a perversely comic spirit bubbles underneath—quite literally in this new one, which takes its name from the torrential vaginal discharges (yup) of one of its more winsome residents, Saeko (a deftly alluring Misa Shimizu). The girl can't help it: She even leaves puddles

behind in the grocery store. Rushing home, she achieves explosive orgasms that spray her walls, ceilings and sexual partners.

Imamura has never been afraid of sex or nudity; such was the key to his critical assault on the myth of kimono-wrapped chastity perpetuated by Japan's "official" cultural exporters. Indeed, watching his lusty couplings in the context of so many sweetly demurring geishas, you'd think he'd invented it. (An earlier



Up for a swim?

Imamura exposé, *The Pornographers*, jives on the same sense of roguish honor that *Boogie Nights* would explore, less daringly, some 30 years later.) Sex—its consummation as well as voyeuristic consumption—is not just a reality in

**Sex isn't just slippery
and fun, but good for
the local economy, too.**

the Imamura universe, it's good for the local economy: Saeko's plenitude drains into the canal where schools of fish are seen gathering.

Sexual release arrives in the form of newly sacked salaryman Yosuke, played by Japan's leading male sufferer, Koji Yakusho (*Cure*, Imamura's own *The Eel*). After initially coming to town in search of a valuable gold sculpture hidden in Saeko's house, he quickly reblooms, settling into a stimulating routine of early-morning employment on a commercial fishing boat, followed by afternoon watersports in the bedroom. This is obviously preferable to the withering dismissals coming from his estranged wife via cellphone ("You're a perpetual loser"); he soon tosses this last link off the pier.

Yosuke's escape into well-lubricated bliss with Saeko has the playful tenor of an idyllic summer vacation; the couple's surreal escapades are well-complimented by Shinichiro Ikebe's loopy score, and the gulls drawn to their juices are like cartoon squiggles over writhing bodies. Imamura has indulged in fancy before, but never so boldly and with such sunny engagement. (*Warm Water* is the tonal opposite of his icily detached masterpiece *Vengeance Is Mine*, also about a great escape but one into the slippery capriciousness of a mind set on random killing.)

Perhaps it's all a bit too dreamy; you begin to yearn for a complicating factor to materialize out of the warnings of Yosuke's crewmates about Saeko's past lover and his decent into madness. And a crisis does come, but with such quiet understatement it's possible to leave the theater mystified. Saeko's watery effusions diminish to a trickle. Jealousies and bruised feelings emerge.

Was it all just the great sex? Imamura has saved reality for his bitter trump card; when he plays it, the full force of his hand is undeniable.

When we think of Ozu's eternal humanism or Kenji Mizoguchi's angelic mother-martyrs redeemed by sacrifice, a national character begins to take shape, even if only defined by honorable aspirations and beautiful lies. It might best be called perseverance, as resonant an ideal to postwar Japan as it was—and still is—to those in need of healing around the globe. Imamura's work extends that hope to the pimps and call girls, the two-bit hustlers and perpetual losers. But more importantly, his films reflect the modernization of that identity into a far more practical notion of adaptability, of survival through mutability. (Adaptability is the key to unpacking the phantasmagoric density of *Spirited Away*, Japan's biggest smash and not for nothing.)

Warm Water's Yosuke—in his transformation from corporate casualty to fisherman, sexual pressure valve and unconditional lover—has his precedent in Imamura's *The Insect Woman*, which traces a young woman's triumph over 40 years of hardship as a maid, mother, widow, labor organizer and madam. There's little judgment here, only the test of survival, pass or fail. This may be the ultimate Imamura legacy: an acceptance, even accommodation, of life's brutality. Judging from Imamura's own surly apprentice, the prolific and disturbingly amoral Takashi Miike, he may actually be onto something. (Miike's savage *Audition* deserves reappraisal in this light: one hour of Ozu-worthy tranquillity counterpoised against one hour of blinding barbarity.) If there is still honor in being named "the most Japanese of Japanese directors" as was Ozu, it might be time to pass the mantle. ■

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...EVEN THOUGH TIMES ARE KIND OF TOUGH RIGHT NOW, WE'RE AMERICA, WE'VE GOT THE HARDEST WORKING PEOPLE IN THE WORLD. WE'VE GOT THE BEST TAX POLICY IN THE WORLD...

HE SAYS STUFF LIKE THAT BECAUSE HE KNOWS IT MAKES ME GRIND MY TEETH.

MA, YOU'RE NOT THE CENTER OF THE WORLD... OTHER PEOPLE GRIND THEIR TEETH TOO.

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Huey then accuses the CIA of training bin Laden in terrorist tactics against the Soviet Union during the Reagan-Bush years and suggests that the current Bush administration was funding the Taliban government. Papers including the New York *Daily News* and Long Island's *Newsday* temporarily dropped the strip.

This didn't surprise McGruder. "I expect some publications to have problems with some of my strips," he says. "I'm pushing the envelope. Just like people had—and are still having—problems with Gary Trudeau and *Dooniesbury*, I expect them to have problems with me. Look, *The Boondocks* comments on issues of race, politics and culture that are seldom brought up in any other public forums. I anticipate controversy."

McGruder is careful to note that "my syndicate has never asked me to change or withdraw my strip." But when the papers balked after 9/11, McGruder temporarily "replaced" *The Boondocks* with *The Adventures of Flagee and Ribbon*, in which anthropomorphic depictions of an American flag and a red-white-and-blue ribbon repeat patriotism shibboleths, and urge people to fight terrorism by spending money. McGruder says he was compelled to respond to what he viewed as "fake patriotism." Americans readily accepted "a flawed election and a president who was appointed by the Supreme Court," he says. "Where was the talk of freedom and patriotism then? This country failed to protect its people and, instead of rallying around the flag, we should be asking some serious questions."

One of the most striking things about McGruder is his erudition. His range of knowledge is impressive, as are his fields of interest. He's as capable of reeling off a litany of learned

complaints and compliments about *Star Wars* as he is about recounting the CIA's history in Afghanistan. In a conversation over a few hours after his appearance at Chicago's Guild Complex, he had dismissed the late rapper Tupac Shakur as a "fraud"; denounced the National Basketball Association; and revealed an intense feud within the NAACP between President Kweisi Mfume and Chairman Julian Bond.

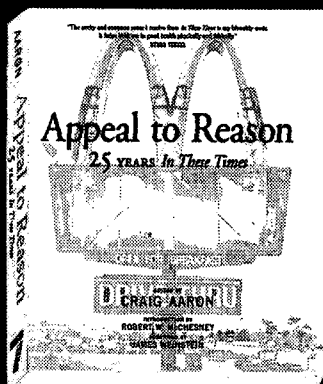
McGruder thinks African-American culture has become lost between the glitter of materialism and the banality of faux hipness. "All hip-hop sucks," he told the Chicago crowd. "On one extreme, you have these guys who are talking about materialism and degrading women and all this stuff; and on the other side, you have these other underground cats who are like 'my cipher, my cipher, my cipher.'... Unfortunately, there are very few people in the middle now. I'm here to say, it's all bad."

"Black people are no longer interested in the cultural aspect of hip hop. So the underground has become mostly white and Asian. The problem with that is that whites and Asians cannot progress hip hop, they can only look at it, study, mimic. But they can't progress the culture, because the culture by definition is a part of the ongoing evolution of the black cultural experience and expressions."

But McGruder is not merely concerned about a trough in the creative cycle of hip-hop; his gripe is a larger one. "We as black people have become artistically stagnant, and that's the biggest danger."

Will mainstream success—several networks have expressed an interest in an animated version of *The Boondocks*—dull McGruder's voice? "It may round off some rough edges, but it won't tame me," he says. "I look at Michael Moore, who has proven you can stay true to your political vision and still be successful. He's my role model." ■

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A Moron's Way

The Boondocks creates controversy on the comics page

By Salim Muwakkil



Aaron McGruder doesn't hide his opinions. "We are saddled with an unelected president," he told an attentive audience at a recent Chicago gathering, "who is also a moron."

Luckily, McGruder gets a chance to share his views with thousands, maybe millions, of others who may come across them as they read the comics. The 28-year-old is the creator of *The Boondocks*, a comic strip series about a couple of black city kids transplanted from Chicago to live with their world-weary grandfather in a predominantly white suburb. Centered on a militant, pre-teen Afrocentrist named Huey Freeman (and his brother Riley, a gangsta rap aficionado), the strip explores many contemporary and controversial issues with sardonic humor and a hip-hop sensibility.

The strip was conceived while McGruder attended the University of Maryland and made its print debut in the student

newspaper in 1997. An immediate hit, the strip was soon picked-up by hip-hop magazine *The Source*. In 1999, Universal Press Syndicate began distributing *The Boondocks* to mainstream newspapers, where it has enjoyed a bumpy but successful ride. The strip now runs in about 250 publications across the country. McGruder is the first African-American to have a major comic strip—but he draws the most attention because of his radical views.

The latest bump was for a strip he did about two weeks after the 9/11 terrorist attacks. In that strip, Huey calls the FBI's terrorist tip line with information on Americans who had helped train and finance Osama bin Laden. "All right, let's see," Huey tells the agent who answers the phone, "the first one is Reagan. That's R-E-A-G ..."

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